AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Janet Adam Smith's books include *Mountain Holidays*, 1946.

Margaret Alexiou is Senior Lecturer in Byzantine and Modern Greek at the University of Birmingham.

Beryl Bainbridge's latest novel, *Watson's Apology*, was published last year.

Reyner Banham is currently completing *A Concrete Atlantis*, a study of US industrial building and its architectural consequences.

Alan Bell is the Librarian of Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

Geoffrey Best is currently at the Centre for International Studies at the London School of Economics, preparing a book on international humanitarian law since 1945.

Craig Brown's most recent book, *The Marsh Marlowe Letters*, was published last year.

Geoff Brown was formerly the Music Editor of *Time Out* and is the author of *Diana Ross*, 1980, and *Michael Jackson*, 1984.

John Buxton is Reader Emeritus in English Literature at the University of Oxford.

A. O. J. Cockshut's books include *Truth to Life*, 1974.

Stefan Collini is the author, with Donald Winch and John Burrow, of *That Noble Science of Politics: A study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History*, 1983.

Richard Combs is the editor of The British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

Neil Corcoran's study of David Jones, *The Song of Deeds*, was published in 1982.

George Craig is a lecturer in French at the University of Sussex.

Patricia Craig is working on a study of Northern Irish poetry and fiction.

Douglas Dunn's collection of stories, *Secret Villages*, was published earlier this month.

Isabel Emmett is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Manchester.

R. N. Gildea is the author of *Education in Provincial France 1800–1914: A study of three departments*, 1983.

Christopher Hawtree is preparing an edition of the magazine *Night and Day*.

John Hayes's most recent book is *Catalogue raisonné of the landscape paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1982.

Lyndall Hopkinson's autobiography, *Nothing to Forgive*, will be published next year.

Robert Irwin's *History of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria* will appear later this year.

Douglas Johnson is Professor of French History at University College London.

Iain McGilchrist is the author of *Against Criticism*, 1982.

Andrew Mango was in charge of BBC Turkish broadcasts for fourteen years.

Stephen Mills is working on a book on the conflict between conservation and forestry in Britain.

Tom Phillips has just completed an illustrated version of his own translation of Dante's *Inferno*.

Roy Porter is the author of *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1982.

Simon Rae's poems appeared in Faber's *Poetry Introduction 5*, 1982.

Colin A. Ronan is the author of *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the World's Science*, 1983.

Larry Shaffer is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the State University of New York.

John Simon is drama critic of *New York* magazine.

J. K. L. Walker's novels include *Horse Latitudes*, 1966.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

W. P. Trent (1862–1939): whereabouts of the ten-volume Life of Defoe left in manuscript by Trent at his death and supposedly to have been edited and published by H. C. Hutchins.

P. N. Furbank.
Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

Dorothy Fletcher, author of *Merrily I Go to Hell* (under the pseudonym of Lady Mary Cameron): any particulars about her life subsequent to 1933; for a memoir of the literary avant-garde of Europe and America from 1925 to 1960.

Norman Macleod.
University Nursing Center, Route One, Box 21, Greenville, North Carolina 27834, USA.

John Burton (1808–81), Leicester printer and photographer: any information about surviving descendants; for a study of the work of his sons Alfred and Walter Burton who became prominent New Zealand photographers.

John B. Turner.
Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland, New Zealand.

Adelaide Ironside (1831–67), Australian painter who studied under Ruskin in London 1865–6: any information about her life and the present ownership of her pictures; for a biography.

Jill Poulton.
29 Spurwood Road, Turramurra, New South Wales 2074, Australia.

Anne Gilchrist (1828–85), author of "An Englishwoman's Estimate of Walt Whitman" and *Mary Lamb*: letters, journals, photographs, locations of her portraits; any information or recollections preserved by her descendants; for a critical biography.

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The Times Literary Supplement

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D. J. Enright

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Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *The Penitent*, originally serialized in the *Jewish Daily Forward* in 1973 and published in English last year, provides a handy introduction to his cast of mind or soul and could serve, if not exactly as a résumé of them, as a gloss on his memoirs. These – *A Little Boy in Search of God*, *A Young Man in Search of Love* and *Lost in America* – are now gathered together, with a new preamble, "The Beginning". In that the memoirs, albeit animated, are somewhat clotted, the reader might also draw on Clive Sinclair's *The Brothers Singer* (1983) for directional aid.

The penitent, Joseph Shapiro, is a Polish Jew, now an American citizen, who accosts the author at the Wailing Wall and tells him the story of his life. In his tirade against the modern world and pre-eminently against the modern Jew (including his former self), Shapiro is sweeping, circumstantial, merciless and often acute. Students of sociology, "while they fouled the world, became experts on how to save it"; students of literature – he has suffered at the hands of both sorts – take some bad writer and find in him meanings he himself had never dreamed of. So-called good writers are no use either: among those who trade in violence and fornication are Tolstoy (Anna Karenina!), Homer, Dante and (because of *Faust*) Goethe. All the kitsch novels in the world, Shapiro complains, have already been translated into the Holy Tongue. But then, modern Hebrew is "one hundred per cent worldly. It's Hebrew, but it's no longer the Sacred Tongue. A language used to build ships and airplanes and to manufacture guns and bombs cannot be a Sacred Tongue." As for women, they are certainly not the Jewish wives their grandmothers were.

The turning point in Shapiro's life came when, by pure coincidence, he stumbled on the Sandzer Chassidim study house, and hence on his future wife Sarah. But "coincidence is not a kosher word": like everything else, the encounter was destined. In his new father-in-law's eyes Shapiro runs to excess: he is a vegetarian. No one who has seen people being eaten can ever again eat an animal. It is vain for Reb Haim to tell him that one doesn't need to be more compassionate than the Almighty, for Shapiro has long been in conflict with the Almighty on this issue. The Evil Spirit has whispered in his head: "What did God do for us Jews that we should love him?" To which he has no reasoned answer and can only say that he would rather speak to an unjust Creator than to the KGB. Now Shapiro has accepted everything, he has returned to his grandfathers; he has grown a beard and earlocks and wears a long gaberdine: "Jewishness leads to faith." Either you are a fundamentalist or you are a pseudo-Gentile, there's no in-between.

In the concluding "Author's Note" Singer declares that, while Joseph Shapiro has made peace with the cruelty of life, he himself has not. "I still say to myself that there isn't and there cannot be a justification either for the pain of the famished wolf or for that of the wounded sheep." You can serve God and still question his injustice. Like "that angry man" Shapiro, he was brought up among extremists, but he cannot agree that there is any final escape from the human dilemma; in fact, "a total solution would void the greatest gift that God has bestowed upon mankind – free choice". Faith coexists with doubt, despair with hope; and you fight your battles as they arise.

In the memoirs Bashevis shows himself an assiduous questioner from the start: "Mama, does a horse have a soul?" His father the rabbi writes commentaries on the Torah; his brother Joshua (I. J. Singer), eleven years older, is keen on "worldly books", including Tolstoy's; Bashevis reads Yiddish story-books about imps, dybbuks and vampires. The boy's questions extend from the sufferings of flies, chickens and fish to cover "all people, all animals, all lands, all times". How can God permit and, in the matter of ritual sacrifice, even encourage such horrors? Joshua, who has become a non-believer, has a ready answer – there is no God, only nature, and nature knows nothing of pity. This doesn't satisfy Bashevis any more than it satisfied Joseph Shapiro, for along with the cruelty there is wisdom in evidence too. Freedom of choice, say the theologians. But, Bashevis muses, does a cat have a choice? Does a mouse? In him there is something of his father, a pious, mystical and good-natured man, and something of his rational, sarcastic and biting mother.

"I stem from generations of rabbis, Chassidim, and cabbalists. I can frankly say that in our house Jewishness wasn't some diluted formal religion but one that contained all the flavours, all the vitamins, the entire mysticism of faith." He soon rejects modern Jews and their (usually Communist) schemes for world improvement, but his own unorthodoxy lies in his inability to resign himself to the unjustness and agonies of God's universe, and also, as he grows up, in his urgent sexuality. When, later in the story, his father visits Warsaw to consult a medical specialist, or rather a "healer", he is amazed to see a column of young people parading through the streets, and carrying sticks no less. Bashevis explains that they wish to emigrate to Palestine, but his father cannot begin to comprehend: good Jews should just stay put where they are, lambs surrounded by wolves, and wait for the Messiah to come. "Jews are tired of waiting", says the son. The father replies, in the spirit of Joseph Shapiro: "Those that grow tired aren't Jews." He adds: "So long as man suffers he cannot solve the riddle of suffering", and then asks the way to the nearest house of worship.

"I liked women", the author states, or understates. And from the outset he shocked Yiddish readers by the way he wrote about sex. His first lover was Gina, twice his age, a holy woman and a whore, whom he both loved and hated; their relationship was thoroughly physical and potently metaphysical, as hectic and tormented as anything in his fiction. A voice in his head – his father's? his grandfather's? – told him he had desecrated his soul: "You are defiled! You've copulated with Lilith, Naamah, Machlat, Shibtal!" His ideal was always "a decent Jewish daughter", but in real life, like Joseph Shapiro, he kept meeting a different sort of woman; he appears to have enjoyed himself far more than Shapiro ever did, and his lovers, however light on morals, had one thing in common with the Almighty – they never calculated the results.

Whatever Bashevis believed or disbelieved, he was sure he wasn't meant to be a soldier, and having received notice of his call-up, he starves himself in order to fail the medical. He had supposed this would weaken him sexually, but it has the opposite effect. The sexual urge, he discovers, is linked with spiritual rather than physical strength: "Love and sex were functions of the soul." (One of his stories, "Moon and Madness", cites the Talmud: "The greater a man is, the greater is his passion.") Early in life passages in the cabbalistic books had captured his imagination – God copulating with his wife, the Divine Presence – despite the authors' warning against taking their metaphors literally. Marx and Freud were merely mechanical in their theories; philosophy, though he persevered with it, had disappointed him; and no more than Joseph Shapiro could he attach any fruitful significance to sociology. Even sex, for all its strange intimations, didn't advance him very far. (The narrator of his story "A Day in Coney Island" speculates on the nature of God – "Can he be sex, as the cabbalists hint? Is God an orgasm that never ceases?") As he lies in bed he has a dream, a formulaic solution to the mysteries preying on him – death was life, and life was death, life was a scab that grew on old planets, "the earth suffered from an eczema of its skin". Then Gina woke him up to announce that she wanted a child by him.

While he couldn't see it himself, being conscious of his ugliness, uncouthness of attire and general incompetence, Bashevis was clearly a great sexual charmer, and the ancestral voices in his head rarely succeeded in holding him back. Even though, as the affair seems to be ending, they are dying of consumption or about to commit suicide, or even though they vanish wordlessly into thin air, his lady friends bear him no ill will. Rather the reverse, for they often crop up later on and lend a helping hand. In this sphere, as in some others, coincidence works to his advantage. But "coincidence is not a kosher word".

In the busy midst of what sounds like an exceptionally vivid love-life, the author at times displays the self-righteousness of Joseph Shapiro, as when complaining about the groupies who frequented the Yiddish Writers' Club in Warsaw; professing to love Yiddish literature but making do with Yiddish writers, these girls were known jokingly as "literary supplements". Perhaps what he holds against them is less their being avid for "illicit affairs" (tut, tut) than their being fellow-travellers of Communism or Zionism. He himself, as he puts it, stole love, but was always caught in the act. One girl friend, Lena, was an ex-Stalinist now turned Trotskyite, on the run from the police, and inclined towards lesbianism. She railed at him as a capitalistic lackey "even as she clamped her lips onto mine", and accused his mystical and supernatural tales of helping to perpetuate fascism, but nevertheless she too wanted to have a child by him. And she did.

The Yiddish papers in which he published his stories were on the edge of collapse. His novel *Satan in Goray* first appeared in one such magazine: not only was he not paid for it, he had to contribute towards the cost of printing

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and paper. A cheque for ninety dollars for a story printed in the American *Jewish Daily Forward*, where his brother Joshua worked as a staff member, was a life-saver. In great part his themes grew out of the stories he had read of demons and miracles, or had heard his father telling as a prophylactic against Joshua's "enlightenment" and infection by logic and science and modernity. But a particular attraction was that such topics, though they didn't explain, at least *illustrated*, where philosophy did neither. Contemporary Yiddish writing he found sentimental and naive, or else Zionist or radical. In his own stories he remained rooted in the Middle Ages, in folklore, magic, dreams and fantasies. "Instead of fighting in my writings the political leaders of a decadent Europe and helping to build a new world, I waged a private war against the Almighty." That couldn't be done in abstract theoretical terms. *The Magic Mountain*, which he translated into Yiddish, he considered a long essay spiced with description, a book for intellectuals on the look-out for "a purpose, a sum total", and lacking in suspense and vitality, though he admired *Buddenbrooks* because of its zest for life. Thieves, whores, freaks, charlatans, holy fools, miraculous happenings, the living dead, possession by demons – now they really had to do with life as it is lived.

"The news is always bad and it poisons your life, but modern man can't live without this poison", Joseph Shapiro declared. And Bashevis's father had warned his family that to start the day by reading the newspaper was "like eating poison for breakfast". But later, in America, Bashevis decides that a writer can learn much from the papers, especially from the so-called yellow press, "a treasure trove of human idiosyncrasies and quirks", mocking the theories of philosophers, the hypotheses of sociologists and psychologists. As he says, he was never concerned with literary style and linguistic innovation and "forced originality"; his interest lies in the countless and diverse situations thrown up by life, the impossible that occurs daily. He "must have a story".

"I denied the existence of Providence, yet I awaited its dictates." It dictated in his favour, and in April 1935, having fought off the women with whom he had conducted "semi-, quarter-, or might-have-been affairs" and who reckoned the eve of his departure was just the time to go all the way, he left for America, on a three-months visa to visit his brother. Officials wearing swastikas show no interest in him, and the worst that happens to him is his forgetting the cabin number out of Cherbourg and throwing the ship into confusion and himself into near-starvation by insisting on vegetarian meals. In one of his tales, we note, a ritual slaughterer, who can no longer live with himself, is saved from being deemed a suicide only by the rabbi's ruling that he must have been raving mad.

Although welcomed warmly by the Jewish community – despite its many miracles and coincidences Singer's life seems to have been peculiarly deficient in goys – he feels lost in the United States. He itches, he sneezes, his ears ring, he is constipated. He can't master the Yiddish typewriter donated by his brother, his fountain pen begins to leak, his new novel is going badly. The leap from the Middle Ages into the New World has thrown him; it is as if he has become an absolute beginner all over again, "in writing, in love, in my struggle for independence". Things look up in one of these departments when he takes a lover in Nesha, a Russian Jewess and widow of a suicide. "We fell upon one another with a hunger that astounded us both"; she finds her husband's spirit in Bashevis's body, he recognizes the dead Gina within Nesha. He might have married Nesha except that it would seem – even to him – that he had done so for the sake of acquiring American citizenship. Instead, he leaves for Toronto to negotiate a permanent visa, taking along Zosia, a devotee of Baudelaire and another refugee from Polish Jewry. He proposes to relieve her of her unwanted virginity. God, however, disposes. Fur "genitals, which in the language of the vulgar are synonyms of stupidity and insensitivity, are actually the expression of the human soul, defiant of lechery, the most ardent defenders of true love". Or else an anti-sexual dybbuk has taken hold of him.

These memoirs end with Bashevis at his most dejected, accepting nothing – like Joseph Shapiro before he came to accept everything. People have abandoned him; or, an inveterate non-joiner, he has abandoned them. He has forgotten his brother's telephone number. He yearns for simple devotion and old-fashioned love, but there isn't any of it in the vicinity. At its best, art is no more than a means of forgetting the human disaster for a while. The *Jewish Daily Forward* has stopped printing his column. A cable comes from Lena, in Athens with his child ("What was she doing in Greece?") asking for money to be sent at once. He has presented creation with an ultimatum: "Give me your secret or let me perish." And it has, as though creation has chosen the second alternative.

But God hasn't stopped writing *his* column. Or his casualty lists . . . . On the bright side Bashevis is still in his thirties, practically all future fiction will be printed in the *Forward*, and further forward a Nobel Prize is waiting.

A. N. Stencl – poet of Whitechapel

S. S. Prawer

When the man who was to become London's foremost Yiddish poet arrived in this country in 1936, he came with bitter memories of Berlin, where he had settled after leaving his native Poland. A. N. Stencl (1897–1983) was indebted to Berlin for many of the experiences that went into his poetry; but Hitler came to power, and it soon became clear that there was no place for a Yiddish poet in the Third Reich. London, by contrast, delighted Stencl – despite the ubiquitous coal-smoke and fog. He did not speak English, but he found the officials with whom he had to negotiate to extend his residence permit both humorous and humane. He fell in love with English painting, encountered reminders of his revered Shakespeare (whom he read in Yiddish and German) everywhere he went, was duly amazed at the freedom of political expression in newspapers and at Speaker's Corner, and soon settled in the East End, where a flourishing Yiddish culture absorbed him. Though appalled at some of the poverty he found in East London, he was delighted by its Yiddish newspapers and theatres, by printers who produced small runs of Yiddish books, by weekend schools, discussion groups, kosher restaurants, coffee shops where small groups of Yiddish-speaking intellectuals argued and feuded, synagogues and *shtibl*, and by the vigorous street life. He soon began a series of essays and poems on London themes, which he published in newspapers, periodicals, small volumes and – above all – in the little pamphlets of a journal he edited himself entitled *Loshn un lebn* (*Language and Life*). The cry "koyfs a heft!" – buy a pamphlet, buy an issue of *Loshn un lebn* – with which he himself boosted the sales of his journal all over the East End, inside and outside meeting-halls of various kinds, made him one of the most familiar figures in Jewish Whitechapel.

The forty-odd years during which *Loshn un lebn* appeared saw a double tragedy. The first, and by the far the more terrible, was the destruction of East European Jewry, the removal of the very soil in which Stencl's art retained its tap-root; the second was the gradual but ever accelerating break-up of the cultural community he had found in Whitechapel. The Yiddish language was heard less and less frequently in London – and its many enemies in the Jewish community itself rejoiced at what they hoped would be its ultimate demise, or at the very least its confinement to certain ultra-orthodox religious circles in which it remained, and will remain, the language of religious instruction and in-group converse.

In the face of all this, Stencl dedicated himself to an attempt to save what could be saved. He carried on, with an ageing but enthusiastic band of like-minded men and women, the *literarishe shabbes nokhmitogs* he had founded: regular meetings on Saturday afternoons in the course of which writers read their own works, the Yiddish classics were recited, Yiddish songs were sung – some of them settings of Stencl's own poems – and small-scale dramatic performances took place. He continued *Loshn un lebn*, despite increasing difficulties, right up to the 1980s, making it an open forum for Yiddish writing in England. He went on writing poetry, sometimes in despair (was not the Yiddish poet "dos finfte rod funm vogn", the *fifth* wheel on the cart which no one needed?) but with a steadily sustained flicker of hope that his legacy would one day be found valuable. Not to go on, to remain inactive while facing the threatened disappearance of yet another Yiddish-speaking community, would be to allow Hitler yet another posthumous triumph.

There are indeed signs that Stencl's act of faith was not in vain, that there is a revival of interest in Yiddish in this country which is drawing a new generation of men and women, inside and outside the universities, into Stencl's orbit. What they will find there is a series of essays which trace the history of Yiddish culture in England from Sholem Aleikhem's great chapter on London to the work of S. Palme and Esther Kreitman; fascinating fragments of autobiography; and a profusion of lyric poems and ballads which unite formal sophistication with lived experience and felt thought. To trace the development of Stencl's poetry is to gain insights into the cultural history of a Yiddish-speaking community in England which can be obtained nowhere else; and the materials for this project are happily available, in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, where copies of all Stencl's publications since his arrival in England may now be found.

Many discoveries remain to be made; but there are two aspects of Stencl's Whitechapel poetry which I find particularly attractive. The first of these is his ability to compose verbal portraits of people he has encountered – barrow-boys, shop-keepers, tailors, painters, rabbis, community bigwigs and many others – in such a way that their present manner and appearance in the streets and houses of Whitechapel are brought into view together with their family origins, with their own past, or that of their parents, in some Polish or Russian *shtetl*. Stencl's verbal portraits are thus very frequently *double* portraits which encapsulate two individuals, two generations, two related yet very different cultural worlds in one brief poem.

The second fascinating feature of Stencl's poetry is what I would call his "component-consciousness". The Yiddish language merges elements of Middle High German, Hebrew and various Slavonic languages, into one distinctive tongue, in much the same way that English has accommodated Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman-French, Celtic and Latin elements. Stencl has worked out for himself many ways in which one or other of those component

Avram Stencl participating in a BBC television film about London's East End in 1966.

elements can be brought to the fore in an expressive way: using, for instance, the Hebrew term *shkie* and the Germanic *zun-farger*, both of which mean dusk or sunset, in the same poem in order to indicate different tonalities, different shades of sensibility. Above all, he has taken full account of the way in which Yiddish in England progressively accommodated English words, without allowing the poems to degenerate into Yinglish. He accepts some of these words into his poetry without question – "budgerl" for "budgerigar", "borr" for "borrow". Others he separates off within inverted commas, to show that they have entered the speech of the community, or of particular speakers, often in distorted form: "der polis", for instance, or "di old penshon". Yet often he uses in a spirit of mockery: when a "rebe" becomes a "reverend", when a "droshe" turns into a "sermon", when the limit of ambition shown by an East End notable is to get his "picture" into the *Jewish Chronicle*, then all is not well in Stencl's world. We find much fierce satire in this poet's work, as well as passionate denunciation; but it is all sustained and "placed" by broad human sympathies and love of a Yiddish culture he felt it his mission to sustain.

By continuing to write poetry in the language he had first absorbed in his Polish-Jewish father's house Stencl kept faith with the murdered millions, with the creators of Yiddish literature and song, with the London community that had accepted him with feelings which ranged from admiration to minimal tolerance. He has left behind a body of work capable of tempting those of us who were not brought up in a Yiddish-speaking environment to learn the language he loved in order to gain access to the richness of his own writings and those of other poets, dramatists and novelists whose cause he always sought to further along with his own.

In Memory of November 29th, 1983

for Jack Brod

Down Mosquito Lagoon, rain-shadows fail
Powdering the bonsai islands – MANATEE
CAUTION (Are mermaids of this Inland Sea
So dangerous?) – Again we use up all
Transmission fluid, near Canaveral –
I lose my cap, getting the jib-sheet free –
Mermaids, you wear it, and imagine me –
By dusk, the Apollo gantries look quite small.
At Dragon Point we turn for
Damn, the boat
Hits a reef in the channel, thirty feet
Clear of the marker –
U.S. Engineers
We curse you! Words unfit for soldiers' ears! –

We're stuck! Scotch on the rocks seems fitting – Neat?
Jack's birthday party (74)'s afloat

ALISTAIR ELLIOT

Cracks in the middle ground

Julian Symons

ASA BRIGGS
The BBC: The first fifty years
439pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0 19 212971 6

W. J. WEST (Editor)
Orwell: The war broadcasts
304pp. Duckworth. £12.95.
0 563 203277

RAYMOND KUHN (Editor)
The Politics of Broadcasting
305pp. Croom Helm. £17.95.
0 7099 1542 X

It began casually, and, in the light of history, anomalously. In 1922 no influential political or social figure felt concerned about the precise nature and purposes of the British Broadcasting Company set up by agreement between the Post Office and the commercial interests linked with the development and sale of wireless sets. "There will be no competition, as it will be the only Broadcasting Company in this country", Sir Ian Noble, one of the first directors, assured the Company's first Chairman, Lord Gainsford, adding that the Company had no business to secure, and would simply provide broadcasting programmes.

The anomaly rested in the fact that the Company's funds came from a licence issued by the Post Office, yet it was not part of the Post Office nor of central government, but a separate organization. Did this matter? It was thought not, since the diet provided by broadcasting avoided any controversial stance. It was not merely that the Company as such had no political opinions, but that it would not in those early years have countenanced the expression of strong political views by a broadcaster. If the unthinkable happened, the remedy proposed by the 1923 Sykes Committee was simple: the Company's licence would not be renewed. In 1926, during the nine days of the General Strike, something almost unthinkable did happen. Churchill, the most bellicose member of the Cabinet Strike Committee, wanted to take government control of the Company, saying that it would be monstrous not to use such an innovation to the best possible advantage. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, was in favour of the Company remaining independent, and got his way. In the first strike news bulletin the announcer said that the Company had no opinions of its own, would give only objective news, and asked for "fair play from both sides". The result satisfied nobody. Churchill nursed a lasting dislike for the Company's chief functionary John Reith, and during the Second World War was said to have called the BBC an enemy within the gates.

The trade unions on their side told strikers through their paper *The British Worker* not to rely on BBC bulletins. Certainly these bulletins were often inaccurate, erring always in the Government's favour. Government appeals were broadcast, for private car drivers to give lifts, for men to stay at work or return to it. No similar appeals reached the air on the union side, no pro-Labour politician spoke, the peace appeal made by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other churchmen was not broadcast until the strike was almost over. This last decision was Reith's own, made under the threat that broadcasting the statement at the time of its issue would give Churchill an ideal excuse for taking over the Company.

The story of the Company's role in the strike is told in Asa Briggs's single-volume history of the BBC's first fifty years, a book notably more relaxed, readable and shapely than his four-volume history of the years up to 1955 completed six years ago. The event's importance in the Company's history is acknowledged but hardly its crucial nature, for Lord Briggs sees the strike as representing "the low-water mark of the power and influence of the BBC during the inter-war years", citing the protests from listeners during and after the strike, and Lloyd George's House of Commons question that finally prompted the broadcasting of the churchmen's message. Certainly the Company's performance was far from brilliant, perhaps even not very competent (although at that time they lacked resources for news gathering), and Reith's acceptance of what he was told about the danger of a takeover may be thought naive or pusillanimous: but the result was the triumphant emergence of the BBC as an independent Corporation (after July 1926 no longer a Company), answerable only to its Governors. The power of broadcasting had been made evident by the strike, however patchy had been the performance. The Conservative Government of the day had looked at the possibility of state control and shuddered away from it, and the prospect was never seriously considered by the Labour and National Governments in the years before and during the war.

The strangeness of the organization that grew up with the licence money supplied by listeners through the Post Office was masked for some years by the even odder nature of the man who ran it. Sir John Reith's influence was seen not merely in such flirts of eccentricity as the instruction that the invisible announcers should wear dinner-jackets in the evening, presumably on the basis that proper decorum and the essential announcer's weightiness could not be achieved at night while wearing a mere lounge suit. It was rather that Reith represented gigmanic respectability so perfectly, his standards were so much in tune with those of the Governments of the period, that he was a more effective representative of the nation's rulers than any appointed Minister could have been. In his emphasis on the importance of religious and educational programmes, his determination to eliminate vulgarity from comic shows, his vision of the importance of broadcasting to the Empire (something begun in 1932, as Briggs tells us, on Reith's personal initiative), and not least in his attempt to ensure that those employed by the Corporation led lives unsmudged by commercial or sexual immorality, Reith satisfied successive Governments that there was no need for interference with the Corporation while he was at the head of it. Churchill and some of his allies may have felt that the BBC nurtured Socialists, but many left-wingers thought of it as the citadel of reaction and foolish censorship. In relation to programmes that endorsed, or even considered, heterodox social or artistic attitudes, Reith's influence was a stifling one, and it prevailed after his retirement in 1938, more or less until the end of the Second World War.

During the war overseas broadcasting expanded dramatically, from six foreign languages in January 1939 to fourteen in December. At home the BBC was anxious to do nothing that contravened Government policy, and this was so even though Briggs quotes a complaint by Sir Kenneth Clark, then at the Ministry of Information, that they had no control over the BBC, and that "even if directives were issued, the BBC would pay no attention to them". Certainly this was not generally true: the most interesting thing about the material relating to George Orwell's two years at the BBC from 1941 to 1943, recently discovered in the archives and now bulked out into a book, is the evidence it provides about the bureaucracy in which he was enmeshed, and the anxiety of his superiors to conform with suggestions from Government officials. When Orwell made two appointments for a series called *In Your Kitchen* the Assistant Controller of Overseas Talks told the Eastern Services Director that it suggested "Blair is setting up an independent business as an Eastern Talks Director", and added that he had asked more than once to be consulted about any new series. Government policy on India (Orwell was part of the Indian section) was adhered to strictly, and any speaker who offered even a whiff of unorthodoxy was not likely to be used again. Harman Grisewood, Assistant Controller of European Services, noted disapprovingly that the veteran broadcaster Vernon Bartlett had written a script in which he "gave vent to views against the Prime Minister's handling of India", and Orwell was often refused speakers. One of those rejected was Aneurin Bevan. When Orwell, with customary directness, asked whether Bevan was "off the black list yet", he was told that no such list existed, but still "Aneurin Bevan would be better left alone".

The broadcasts themselves are of little interest, and the editor W. J. West absurdly inflates the significance for Orwell of the time he spent at the BBC, about which he said that he was "just an orange that's been trodden on by a very dirty boot". His comments range from the improbable (that an adaptaton of a story by Ignazio Silone called "The Fox" was the basis of *Animal Farm*) to the absurd, in his remark that Guy Burgess – for a while Orwell's colleague, but not revealed as a Soviet agent until after Orwell's death – might have been the model for O'Brien in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

If the BBC was generally agreed to have emerged from the Second World War with much credit, this was at least in part because it had conformed so readily with Government wishes even in the most minor matters. George Barnes, when Director of Talks, said severely that nothing put forward in talks about food must be in any way contrary to the policy of the Ministry for Food. In 1946 the licence fee was doubled to £1 and the Third Programme was inaugurated, setting a standard for a decade or more particularly in radio drama, that has not been approached in recent years. In 1967 Radio 3 swallowed the Third Programme, but its creative force had declined some while earlier. In the same year Lord Hill moved from the Chairmanship of ITA to Broadcasting House, in what was (surely rightly) seen as a move to check the innovatory activities of the then Director-General, Sir Hugh Greene.

The end of the Third Programme and Hill's appointment were both significant of the BBC's move from the Land of Was to the Land of Is, from the position of serene monopoly to one of competition, from comparative indifference to the precise numbers who heard "difficult" programmes to an increasingly anxious counting of listening – and watching – heads. For much of the last decade the BBC has been fighting enemies on all sides; enemies complaining of its bureaucracy, its complacency, the outrageousness (or alternatively the tedium) of its programmes, the size of its licence fee. Asa Briggs's book would have been still more valuable than it is, if he had been able to approach the Land of Is more nearly. He gives us the first fifty years, but if he could have added the following ten his narrative would necessarily have ended on a different note. In 1977 the Annan committee said that "the only possible alternative" to a licence fee would be a direct grant from the Exchequer, "and we reject this because we think it will undermine the BBC's independence". In the Land of Is, however, another possibility is aired: advertising, which had been briskly rejected by the very first commission of inquiry on the ground that it would "lower the standard". In this respect the wheel has turned full circle. In the first twenty years of the BBC's independance its enemies wanted to see it under Government control. Today Thatcherite theorists are opposed to any control except that of the market.

In the Land of Is the BBC suffers, more than ever it did in the past, from its anomalous nature. The licence fee is seen by many as a kind of tax they are forced to pay, comparable to the Road Fund tax. "You tell me the BBC isn't the Government", people say, "but I have to pay whether I like it or not, and I get the commercial channels free." In extreme cases such unsophisticated arguments lead to a plea for an unlicensed set that would receive ITV programmes only. BBC television is identified as the establishment service, the stuffy one that wins out on state, royal or other grand occasions, but is second choice for the rest of the year. (The same considerations don't apply to sound radio, where the BBC still has an effective monopoly in drama and serious music, but sound radio is not now the major partner in broadcasting, nor ever will be again.) And because the BBC is vaguely identified with the Government it is impaled cruelly on several prongs of Morton's Fork. If it produces programmes that may in any way offend Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells, the offence will be the greater because it is perpetrated on the "official" service. If both BBC and ITN newscasters said "Fuck it" while reading the news, it would be the BBC newscaster's expletive that caused the greater scandal. If the BBC drops in the ratings the newspapers (some proprietors of which have interests in commercial TV) gleefully record the fact, but if they go all out for ratings by showing soaps, games and chat

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shows, they are accused of selling out.

And the BBC's problems today only begin with inability to shake off the "establishment" label. Alasdair Milne, the present Director-General, put it succinctly when he said that the BBC now is "besieged from both sides by people who feel that there is no middle ground". *The middle ground*, that area on which one could stand securely, balancing reasoned opinion on one side with reasonable dissent on the other, that ground now shows cracks all over and quakes under the foot, as lesbians and feminists, Blacks and Asians, old revolutionaries and young fogeys, supporters and opposers of the pill, advocates of more or less or altogether different education, those concerned about acid rain or lead in petrol or cholesterol consumption, are only leaders in the great queue of organizations and individuals clamouring to make their case on the box. the middle ground of sweet reasonablesness is felt by many producers not to make interesting television, so that one may get programmes like *Yesterday's Men*, in which Labour politicians were conned into making appearances used in ways they deprecated or deplored. The revolution in social and sexual attitudes during the 1960s, expressed rather than led by Hugh Greene, produced some exhilarating programmes, but left behind nothing permanently valuable.

There is also the new technology. In a collection of essays on *The Politics of Broadcasting* in eight countries, all of them "liberal-democratic" (ie, not dictatorships), Ralph Negrine writes of "the end of the public service tradition" in Great Britain, although it it is true that his heading carries a question mark after it. The editor of the volume, Raymond Kuhn, says in his introduction that there is a "crisis of the public service ethos", perhaps evident especially in France, Italy and Australia, a crisis caused chiefly by technical change. "New developments in broadcasting such as satellite, fibre optics cable and the video cassette recorder promise (or threaten) to increase the number of programme outlets available to the viewer", and Kuhn thinks this will inevitably undermine "balanced scheduling" of the kind enforced in Britain by the IBA as well as the BBC. It may seem that the schedule is not very well balanced when chat and quiz shows can be seen competing on the two main television channels, but to look at other countries is to count British blessings.

In Italy the advance of wholly unregulated radio and television (with between 700 and 800 private television stations) has meant that in the Rome area private television has supplied in a given month 196 hours of viewing, comprising 121 hours of films, thirty of cartoons, thirty-two of games, sports and pop music – and less than thirteen hours of news. In France the crude manipulation of television and radio by the Giscard régime through the appointment of Government nominees was accompanied by an increasing emphasis on "entertainment" television, largely in the form of cheap American imports. Under Mitterrand the state monopoly has been broken, but the likely effect on television, Kuhn suggests, is that the state sector will become "the poor relation of the system". In Australia the Fraser Government, by Richard Harding's account, deliberately set out to destroy the influence of the state service ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission), and in its eight years of power largely succeeded.

What will happen in Britain? The use of television for party political ends, as in France and Australia, seems unlikely. The wide spread of cable television also now seems less probable than it did a year or two back, and it may be that the British, who have taken so warmly to the expensive video-cassette, will be lukewarm about the equally expensive cable services. There are many, however, eager to deluge us with rubbish, either in the name of freedom or, more subtly persuasive, by saying that television and radio programmes are so bad that they can't get much worse, pointing out that the top BBC programme on television is often *Dallas*, with other soap operas and sitcoms prominent in the first ten.

But that is not the whole story. "Public service broadcasting", to use the common though rather smug description, can continue to exist given the will of any Government in power. While the amount of the licence fee is fixed by the Government there must always be a temptation for it to tighten or loosen the purse strings, and now that such a means of exercising control is no longer dismissed as unthinkable, it must be accepted that the position of the BBC in British society has changed. Its greatest protection lies in the "balanced scheduling" achieved through the complicated system of checks and balances set up in the commercial system, that is responsible for the very existence of Channel 4. If the loose but real authority exercised by the IBA over the commercial companies were removed, the floodgates would be opened, the BBC would be forced into a catastrophic scramble for shows with high ratings, conducted from a financial position increasingly disadvantageous.

Whether the BBC is financed wholly through licence fees, or by a licence fee plus advertising as in some other countries, is much less important to its successful survival than the maintenance of the restrictions ensuring balanced scheduling. Under such restrictions fine home-grown programmes are being made in all areas of television, factual programmes that do not insult the intelligence, dramatic fictions made with skill and subtlety, arts programmes sometimes wayward or absurd but as often perceptive and imaginative. The primary purposes of television must always be factual and educational, but its aesthetic justification rests in programmes truly televisual – *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, *Gossip from the Forest*, *The Secret Orchard of Roger Ackerley* (all derived from books, but transformed in the process), Tom Stoppard's *Professional Foul*, Alan Bennett's *An Englishman Abroad*, some of Dennis Potter's plays, Malcolm Muggeridge's memories of Indian days long ago, are a few that come instantly to mind. Such programmes are genuinely popular art, not in the sense of finding a lowest common denominator of popular taste as soap opera does, but in treating a medium often vulgarly debased with the sensibility of an artist. It should be accepted that most of these programmes are in the cant word elitist – that is, they appeal to a sizeable minority rather than to the majority of viewers. Such is the appeal of BBC 2 and Channel 4, as it was of the Third Programme in its palmy days. No such programmes are made in the land ruled by ratings, the United States. The conditions that make them possible, the restrictions that make them possible, should not wilfully or willingly be abandoned.

Chop and change

Hugo Young

GEOFFREY K. FRY
The Changing Civil Service
162pp. Allen and Unwin. £15 (paperback, £5.95).
0043500633

When the assessment comes to be made of the first two Thatcher Administrations, reforms of the bureaucracy will be an important item. There will be entries on both the credit and the debit sides. On the one hand, the sheer force of the assault on the concept of public service, led by the Prime Minister herself, has resulted in a loss of status and self-esteem. Although the parasitic nature of public work may now be emphasized with less urgency than it was five years ago (as even Thatcherite ministers have inevitably become exponents rather than critics of administrative power), no one is in any doubt about its standing with the present Government. Evidence of this is to be found in the unprecedented difficulty Whitehall now has in recruiting its future élite from among the brightest and the best, and in the marked increase in people leaving the Civil Service early to find fortune and satisfaction elsewhere. Sir Robert Armstrong, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, has spoken of his apprehensions about the effects this depletion will have on the manning of the top posts in a decade's time.

There will also be substantial entries on the credit side, however. Of all man's inventions, bureaucracies have the most extravagant capacities for torpor. The present Government is more aggressively committed than any of its predecessors to change, however painful, both by cutting manpower and by encouraging management skills. This is the main territory covered by Geoffrey Fry's book.

It is, in fact, a tightly packed conspectus of developments since the publication of the Fulton Report in 1968. The "change" to which the title refers has more to do with administrative structures, the evolving principles of civil service pay and the drastically altered role of the unions than with the political – and even philosophical – debate about the function of bureaucracy. Fry alludes to some of the manifestations of this radical political argument, but on the whole seems more at home with the shifting minutiae of pay formulae and entry systems. What we are offered is a valuable guidebook to the labyrinth of recent managerial changes in the civil service, not least on the trade union front. Ministers who served in Mr Heath's government from 1970 to 1974 found the unions much the most altered feature of the landscape when they returned to run their departments in 1979. An era when the minister saw his local union secretaries once a year for a Christmas drink had been replaced by one in which monthly, if not weekly, disputatious encounters had become the norm. Fry's account of the institutional shifts underlying this change helps make it more intelligible.

Nevertheless, the book is irritatingly devoid of a clear point of view. In his preface, the author says that not everyone will agree with his interpretation; also that his work should not be classified as "anti-Fulton". One has the puzzling impression here of being half-admitted to some touchy academic controversy, with Fry cast in the role of the daring scourge of an orthodoxy. But the reader will find it hard to find in it anything so unambiguous. Fry observes that many of the Fulton reforms have not come to pass, but he does not sound particularly hostile to the modernization it was seeking to bring about. Similarly, where value judgments obtrude into his account of the Thatcher effect on Whitehall, he seems to have a foot planted firmly in each camp. This may be a sound principle of good reporting, but it does not carry academic insight further forward. One hoped for a clarifying line of argument around which the copious material gathered here would be rendered more challenging and digestible.

Potential for power

S. G. Checkland

STANLEY CHAPMAN
The Rise of Merchant Banking
224pp. Allen and Unwin. £18.
0043320945

LAWRENCE H. WHITE
Free Banking in Britain: Theory, experience, and debate, 1800–1845
171pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
0521258596

The history of banking in Britain has been opening up in an encouraging way in recent years. The Bank of England, first studied by J. H. Clapham, has been further illuminated by Richard Sayers's splendid volumes of 1976. Then it was the turn of the commercial institutions. There was, first, Jack Winton's volume on Lloyds; and now we learn that the Midland will celebrate its 150 years of existence in 1986 with a comprehensive history.

Perhaps the most dramatic story is that of merchant banks, but they, instead of promoting objective studies, have sought to continue the heroic tradition of Victorian biography. They retain journalists or even novelists (or sometimes retired executives) to prepare privately printed near-panegyrics containing almost no real information or thought.

But the winds of change have recently begun to blow, with Rothschilds and Barings appointing full-time archivists to organize their mountains of material and to administer access to the "historic" part of it. There is now a prospect that the work being done in the United States and on the Continent may be paralleled by studies of the pioneering and dominant British role in international banking. In *The Rise of Merchant Banking*, Stanley Chapman has seized the opportunity presented in this new, more positive atmosphere to offer a general study of British merchant banking, using the access to the archives in whose opening up he himself has played an important part (modestly unmentioned in his article in the *TLS*, January 18, 1985). He presents a valuable picture of how the merchant banking system came into being, and how it has operated, together with a summary critique. He replaces the fictions of popular journalism with something much less dramatic and romantic. Instead of depicting the merchant bankers of the nineteenth century as princes of finance, practitioners of mysterious and awe-inspiring skills, urbane and polished citizens of the world, or conspiratorial enemies of the people, he fits them into a framework familiar to economic historians who have studied the less glamorous sectors of the economy, such as textiles, on which Chapman originally worked. Theirs was a business like the others.

They were not always as responsive to opportunity as they might have been. Indeed Chapman's view is that in some degree they muffed it. Their achievements, though in a sense remarkable, were less than they might have been, given the expansionist age in which they functioned. A powerful strand of conservatism made it difficult for British merchant bankers to depart from their traditional business of helping to finance trade, together with providing the safer state loans, and to make the most of fresh opportunities such as railways, especially in the newly opened parts of the world. Moreover, they were never called upon, as was Pierpont Morgan in the United States, to force sense upon stubborn magnates or to rationalize railway systems, the steel industry and much else. Yet they were central to the financing of British trade, with their knowledge of markets and of credit-worthiness. This function Chapman sees as having been of more far-reaching importance than the promotion of foreign loans.

Having deprived the merchant bankers of some of their glamour, Chapman compensates by defending them from simplistic treatment. He insists that they are not susceptible to any convenient class categorization, nor do they yield easily to the boxes constructed by sociologists for their surveys. It is true that they have populated the boardrooms of the commercial banks, not to speak of the Bank of England, together with those other great repositories of savings, the investment trusts and insurance companies, as well as forming and dominating international syndicates. The potential for power was certainly there, but we still do not know what they did with it, and how their actions related to the economic and social interests of the country. There is no straight line from power to perfidy, any more than there is from power to beneficence: Chapman both introduces us to the merchant banks as a general phenomenon and provides us with a perspective on them which may well form the basis for useful debate.

The merchant bankers had nothing directly to do with the domestic money supply; this is mainly with the private and commercial institutions down to the 1840s and then increasingly with the Bank of England. In *Free Banking in Britain* Lawrence H. White takes the view that the movement toward central bank control was a mistake and that the economy would have done better under a system with much greater freedom (uncontrolled entry and no constraints on the issue of notes by banking companies except that they be specie-based). In today's context White believes that what is required is deregulation of banking. There is much interesting discussion of banking and monetary controversy before and around 1844 focused on this theme, which makes a good deal of play with Scottish experience. White argues that free banking in his sense, taking the state right out of the money supply, is an essential component of the liberal society. Though few would go so far, his book provides a valuable test of such a thesis.

Domination theory

John Casey

JEAN FRANÇOIS REVEL with the assistance of BRANKO LAZITCH
How Democracies Perish
Translated by William Byron
376pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
0297786144X

Jean-François Revel believes that there is something called "The West", which consists of democracies, and which includes, as well as Western Europe and America, Japan (and, one guesses, Australia and Singapore). The West is engaged in a ceaseless global struggle with totalitarianism, once represented by Fascism and Nazism, but now by Communism. Communism is, however, particularly tricky to combat because, unlike Fascism, it "parades as democracy perfected" whereas in actual fact it is "the absolute negation of democracy". Democracy, Revel argues in *How Democracies Perish*, has a "vocation": "the patient and realistic improvement of life in a community".

(Those who hold the old-fashioned idea that "democracy" simply denotes a certain sort of constitution may dissent from the notion that it instead embodies an actual political programme. They might also note incidentally that it is a programme which seems to have been carried out rather well by early Victorian England, which was not a democracy, and less well by Mr Papandreou's Greece, which is.)

Communism, on the other hand, having always failed to fulfil this vocation, must *necessarily* seek foreign expansion. Thus, the Soviet Union, as leader of world communism, must be aiming at world conquest. However, whereas the democracies, absorbed as they are in self-improvement, are not very good at defending themselves, totalitarianism, on the other hand, "smashes opposition" very efficiently, since it uses methods "that are simple and infallible because they are undemocratic".

Revel largely offers generalizations supported by anecdote to illustrate his contention. Let us examine a few of these: "Communism is more skilful, more persevering than democracy in defending itself." Really? One has to point out that neither Stalin's destructive purging of his officer corps just before the German invasion, nor his refusal to put his forces on a war footing (despite repeated warnings), nor indeed the readiness of large sections of the Soviet population to defect to the enemy at the beginning of the war, show Communism to be particularly resourceful in defending itself. The Soviet victory was due ultimately to Russian patriotism and not to Communism. One can go on: was the United States unskilful in its war against Japan? Was Finland, in its resistance of the Russian invasion? And was the British appeasement policy of the 1930s really only the expression of democratic softness, rather than the product of a (perhaps mistaken) assessment of the realities of power in Europe?

Communism, Revel further argues, is "determined to erase democracy from our planet" and is "frequently successful" in pursuing that goal. He cites the huge expansion of Soviet power after the war to support this assertion. Yet you do not have to be pro-Russian to think that the Soviet retention of control over territories seized from Hitler's Germany does not prove the existence of expansionist designs, let alone of an overall plan for world conquest. For suppose that the most important Soviet aim was to maintain the division of Germany, in the fear that a reunited, resurgent *Reich* would become the dominant power in Central Europe, exerting considerable economic and political influence over most of the countries now in the Warsaw Pact. This would "necessarily" (to use Revel's favourite word) threaten the stability of the Soviet system. (Furthermore the Russians have actually had some unfortunate experiences with the Germans.) Is "world conquest" even the most *likely* explanation, let alone the only one?

Revel's belief that the Russians' goal in Eastern Europe was "to extinguish democracy" is hugely misleading. Of all the countries that fell into Soviet hands after the war only Czechoslovakia was truly a democracy before 1939. Nor is his list of unremitting Soviet successes much more convincing. After all, in the context of a master-plan for world domination, to "lose" Yugoslavia, Albania and, above all, China, begins to look like carelessness. Even Africa does not really prove Revel's thesis. It is true that many African countries went through a brief stage of pseudo-parliamentary government imposed by the colonial powers, and then transformed themselves into one-party states officially adhering to Marxist ideologies. But hardly any – Angola, Sekou Touré's Guinea and Ethiopia might be among the exceptions – became Russian vassals.

One might think that a theory demonstrating that the largest country in the world has for nearly seventy years been pursuing a consistent strategy to attain world domination would require a serious assessment of evidence, a weighing of alternative hypotheses, a recognition of how incredibly difficult it would be to keep to such a plan. But Revel offers none of this. Consequently, suppose one were to argue that certain Soviet interventions – in Afghanistan, for instance – are in harmony with traditional tsarist foreign policy, and that the retention of Eastern Europe can be accounted for in the way I have already suggested. Then surely the conspiracy theory might seem not only implausible but even pernicious.

But the weighing of possible alternatives has no place in Revel's system of certainties. He doesn't question his starting-point – that democracies must all have interests in common just because they are democracies. He doesn't allow for the possibility that American and European interests might be in serious conflict. The Americans, for instance, had no interest in preserving the European colonial empires. This is, indeed, an abjectly pro-American tract.

He regards anecdote as a sufficient basis for many of his beliefs. A "member of President Ford's cabinet" (the Secretary of State? the Postmaster General?) tells him that Kim Il Sung could invade South Korea tomorrow, and the Americans would do nothing about it. Gomulka's "official translator" alleges that Brezhnev praised de Gaulle (one of Revel's villains) for weakening American influence. He claims that the Politburo in 1953 did not believe that they could hang on to East Germany (no source is given).

His account of the abandonment of the neutron bomb project is especially revealing. He thinks that the enterprise foundered as a result of a successful Communist propaganda drive which succeeded in labelling the bomb a "capitalist" weapon (because it would kill people but spare property). Hence, "the democracies" rejected a measure that would have reduced Soviet military superiority over the West. Yet if it is as simple as that, why didn't President Reagan revive the project? Surely *he* would not have been demoralized by a propaganda campaign? A similar campaign did not deter him from persevering with the deployment of cruise missile (or from pursuing the Star Wars programme, of which the British Foreign Secretary has expressed the gravest doubts). Revel ignores the true grounds for doubt about the neutron bomb – that, being a battlefield nuclear weapon, it might, if used, elide the distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons and lead to a hideous nuclear exchange in Europe.

Revel is firmly attached to the politics of gesture. For example, his eloquent denunciation of the impotence of "the West" in the face of martial law in Poland issues in nothing more than a stirring call for – sanctions. Some might take this as a tacit admission that nothing can actually be done that might destabilize the Soviet Empire.

Revel's thesis could still be true, but in this strident book he has done next to nothing to substantiate it. Instead he has provided us with a striking instance of the extreme danger in world affairs of liberal paranoia.

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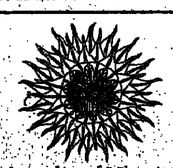

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Kingly kindnesses

John Kenyon

G. P. V. AKRIGG (Editor)
Letters of James VI and I
546pp. University of California Press. £35.50.
0 520047079

The papers of English kings are not accorded the same veneration as those of American presidents, or even congressmen. Thus the letters of James I are scattered across the world's repositories in their hundreds, perhaps thousands, but G. P. V. Akrigg's offering of 227 of them is the most ample collection for any monarch prior to 1760, and its usefulness is enhanced by a detailed check-list of all James's letters in print. The editing is impeccably done, and it is matched by the book's elegant format. But it is a pity that Professor Akrigg has allowed himself so little elbow-room in his brief introduction to assess the character and policy of a monarch whose reputation has been rising steadily over the past twenty years from the slough of contempt in which the Whig historians left it.

Of course, any representative collection must find room for much that is over-familiar; James's correspondence with Cecil prior to Elizabeth's death, for instance, and his drivelling letters to the Prince of Wales ("baby Charles") and the Duke of Buckingham ("Steenie") in the early 1620s. Moreover, the recent revaluation of his reputation focuses on his policy towards the Common Law, Parliament and the Church, which are only thinly covered in these letters – the Law not at all. So, it is enlightening to read his reproof to the House of Commons for their rejection of union with Scotland:

It is in you now to make the choice: either by yielding to the providence of God and embracing that which he hath cast in your mouths, to procure the prosperity and increase of greatness to me and mine, you and yours, and by the away-taking of that partition wall which already, by God's providence, in my blood is rent asunder, to establish my throne, and your body politic, in a perpetual and flourishing peace; or else, contemning God's benefits freely offered unto us, to spit and blaspheme in his face by preferring war to peace, trouble to quietness, hatred to love, weakness to greatness, and division to union, to sow the seeds of discord to all our posterities.

But otherwise there are only his occasional, well-known complaints to his ministers of the fractiousness of Parliament, particularly in 1610 and 1621.

On the Church, whose statesmanlike pacification, in England and Scotland alike, is now regarded as one of his outstanding achievements, there is even less. However, I would single out his sharp reproof to the Kirk in 1617 for suggesting that the sacraments be taken sitting down at the communion-table. He told the Archbishop of St Andrews: "Truly in this we must say that the minister's ease and commodious sitting on his tail has been more looked to than that kneeling which, for reverence, we directly required to be enjoined to the receivers of so divine a sacrament."

His well-established opinion of the English Puritans is indirectly conveyed, however, in a letter reprimanding his favourite, Somerset, for bumptiousness:

Think never to value yourself to me of any other merits so much as by love and heartily humble obedience. It hath ever been my common answer to any that would plead for favour to a Puritan minister by reason of his rare gifts, that I had rather have a conformable man with but ordinary parts than the rarest men in the world that will not be obedient, for that leaven of pride sours the whole loaf.

But on the whole these letters tend to expose the less worthy aspects of James's character – his total inability to cope with money, his neglect of routine (or not so routine) business for the sake of pleasure, and his increasing tendency as he grew older to lapse into nauseating drivel. It must have set Lord Salisbury's teeth

James VI and I

on edge, as it does ours, to be addressed as "my little beagle", even more as "the little beagle that lies at home by the fire when all the good hounds are daily running on the fields"; and surely it must have irritated Buckingham to be told:

The Lord of Heaven send you a sweet and blithe wakening, all kind of comfort in your sanctified bed, and bless the fruits thereof that I may have sweet bedchamber boys to play me with, and this is my daily prayer, sweet heart. When thou rises, keep thee from importunity of people that may trouble thy mind, that at meeting I may see thy white teeth shine upon me.

However, even when he is at his most inane the sharp blade of common sense lances every now and then through the verbiage, as in one letter to his son in Madrid in 1623, in which he enjoins him not to forget his main foreign policy aim, the recovery of the Palatinate, in his ardent wooing of the Infanta – "that the world may see you have thought as well upon the business of Christendom as upon the codpiece point".

James was never unconscious of his own failings, at least in correspondence with his intimates, and in 1605 he wrote to Salisbury, presumably from Royston or some other hunting hide-out:

I cannot but confess that it is a horror to me to think upon the height of my place, the greatness of my debts, and the smallness of my means. It is true my heart is greater than my rent, and my care to preserve my honour and credit by payment of my debts far greater than my possibility. This cannot but trouble me at home and torture me abroad, for I confess that though I have more exercise of body here, I have less contentment of spirit than at home, for there by conference I get some relief and here I do only dream upon it with myself.

Even so, the second alternative was preferable, though a year or two later he had the good grace to say, "I confess I am happy in such servants that watch for me when I sleep and in my absence are careful so to sweep and trim the house against my return."

Even as a young man, king of a poor country, his dignity, his cunning and his wit were much in evidence; witness his answer to Queen Elizabeth's assurances that the execution of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, had been an unintended accident:

Whereas...you purge yourself of that unhappy fact, as on the one part considering your rank, sex, consanguinity and long-expressed goodwill to the defunct, together with your many and solemn attestations of your innocency, I dare not wrong you so far as not to judge honourably of your unspotted part therein. So, on the other side, I wish that your honourable behaviour in all times hereafter may fully persuade the whole world the same.

A few years later, in a very different tone, he vented his wrath at the deficiencies of Scots administration on the Clerk Register:

I have been Friday, Saturday and this day waiting upon the direction of my affairs and never mann [can] command. Them of the Exchequer that was ordained to take the accounts wait never on [me]. The turns of the House [hold] should have been ended this day – no man comes down. I sent for the Advocate both Friday and Saturday – neither meet [ing] nor answer. . . .I ordered, as ye heard, a certain number to make overtures for reforming of the session – no such thing meditat. . . .In short, no tryst or date is kept. What is spoken this night late is forgotten the morn.

His continuing tirade lapsed into incoherence, but it ended with the rather feeble injunction, "Show this letter to the Chancellor and as many of our folks as ye meet withal", and there is no known sequel.

The essential kindliness of James VI and I, his informal generosity of heart, shines through these letters, and helps make them eminently quotable. There are few monarchs in whose correspondence it is a pleasure to browse, but he is one of them; and Professor Akrigg is to be congratulated on producing a representative selection demonstrating his style and tone.

Cousinly conflicts

Guy M. Wilson

ALISON PLOWDEN
Two Queens in One Isle. The deadly relationship of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots
243pp. Brighton: Harvester. £15.95.
0 7108 05179

"The Catholic faith and the assertion of my God given right to this crown are the two issues on which I am condemned." So wrote Mary Stuart approximately six hours before she was beheaded in Fotheringay Castle on Wednesday, February 8, 1587. There was a great deal of truth in what she wrote. To the Catholic powers of Europe Mary Queen of Scots had a better claim to the English throne than the illegitimate, heretic and, from 1570 on, excommunicant Elizabeth. If, for reasons of state, the Catholic powers did not always support Mary's claim, this did not prevent the Queen of Scots from becoming, during her eighteen-year confinement in England, a focus for national discontent and internationally inspired dissidence. Repeated threats to Elizabeth's life, most of which involved Mary, whether as an innocent figurehead or as an active participant, eventually forced Elizabeth to order Mary's execution. The religious and political implications of Mary Stuart's death were considerable for, as Neville Williams has noted, "It was a final declaration that England was a Protestant country with all that this implied and therefore Catholicism was a hopelessly lost cause."

Many biographers of Mary Stuart have pointed out that, despite her imprisonment and execution, Mary eventually triumphed, Her son James became the first king to rule both England and Scotland, and all our subsequent monarchs have been directly descended from her. Alison Plowden, in *Two Queens in One Isle*, takes this idea one step further, and sees the whole tragedy of Mary as historically inevitable:

The brutal truth is that the Queen of Scots had served her historical purpose on the June day in 1566 when she gave birth to her son at Edinburgh Castle and from then on that fascinating, dangerous woman was destined to become a mere supernumerary to be discarded or used as it suited the purpose of others.

It is a pity that such a sensible book concludes with such an uncharacteristic lapse into a dubious philosophy of history. In general Miss Plowden, author of a number of excellent works on Elizabeth I and her times, gives here a very balanced and neat account of the characters of the two Queens and of the complex web of events which both bound them together and tore them apart. Where a point remains obscure, or certainty about an event is impossible, she has the courage to say so. She emphasizes Mary's great bravery and power of decision at times of crisis and compares this very subtly with Elizabeth's frequent periods of seeming indecisiveness, when faced with unpleasant choices. She emphasizes the irony of the situation, for Elizabeth's indecision was usually more apparent than real, and when it came to matters of importance her judgment proved time and time again to be superior to that of Mary Stuart.

Plowden writes clearly and simply and this is of enormous help in a book which deals with such a large and difficult sujcct. Unfortunately she occasionally lapses into modern jargon, as, for example, when discussing the Northern Rising, she records that the Catholic English gentry did not respond "in any meaningful numbers". But, such lapses are rare and in general she writes vigorously and intelligently; her greatest strength is the ability to clarify without tending to over-simplify and thus to distort. *Two Queens in One Isle* is a very successful attempt to document and explain a complicated relationship.

A stress on the rational

John Turner

RUDDOCK F. MACKAY
Balfour: Intellectual statesman
388pp. Oxford University Press. £19.50.
0 19212245 2

A. J. Balfour is memorable for many things. His rise to the premiership in succession to his uncle Robert, the third Marquess of Salisbury, was the source of the expression "Bob's your uncle". He was the first Conservative leader since Peel to be booted out by his party. As Ruddock Mackay points out, he held Cabinet rank for twenty-seven years, longer than Churchill, Gladstone, Pitt the Younger or Lord Liverpool, and eleven of those years came after his ejection from the Tory leadership. He made a number of memorable remarks, the most famous being his response to enquirers after he had advised the King against choosing Curzon to succeed Bonar Law in 1923: "And will dear George be chosen?" – "No, dear George will not." His capacity to be witty and wounding cannot be doubted, and his political career gained much from his debating powers; but a Damoclean question-mark hangs over his reputation as a statesman and politician.

Balfour was put into politics in 1874 at the age of twenty-six, as a member for his uncle's pocket borough of Hertford. From 1878 to 1880 he was Salisbury's PPS and began to make a small contribution to debate. After the Conservative defeat in 1880 he constituted himself an associate rather than a member of the Gorst–Churchill–Wolff "Fourth Party", but left it when the National Union dispute of 1883–4 set the group against Salisbury. In 1885, when Gladstone's government fell, Salisbury made him President of the Local Government Board, then Secretary at the Scottish Office in 1886, from which he was translated in 1887 to be Chief Secretary for Ireland. He had been a Cabinet minister since November 1886. His government of Ireland – which occupies a mere four pages in this book because Mackay does not wish to repeat Professor L. P. Curtis – proceeded on the now well-established principle of locking up his opponents with only rudimentary trials or none at all, while introducing minor economic palliatives. In 1891 he became Leader of the House of Commons, a post to which he returned when the Conservatives returned to office. He occasionally deputized for his uncle at the Foreign Office, took charge of important legislation, answered questions, and generally prepared himself for the inevitable, which came when Salisbury stepped down in 1902.

A smooth passage to the top of the hill was followed by a rather bumpier ride down the other side. Within a year of becoming premier he was challenged by Joseph Chamberlain's demand for Tariff Reform. He failed to keep the party together, lost the 1905 election by an enormous margin, and proceeded to lose the two 1910 elections as well. In 1911 the Balfour Must Go campaign, led by Tariff Reformers, forced him into resignation. He was brought back into office as First Lord of the Admiralty in the Asquith coalition in 1915, shifted to the Foreign Office by Lloyd George in 1916, and retained as Lord President after the end of the war. As a keen coalitionist he took no ministerial role in the Bonar Law and Baldwin governments which succeeded Lloyd George, but he was re-appointed to the Lord Presidency, his last office, in Baldwin's second administration in 1925. Though by then close to inanition, he remained in office until that government fell in 1929, and died in 1930 at the age of eighty-one.

Balfour developed to a high art, but in the most inappropriate circumstances, his uncle Robert's technique of looking bored until a problem went away, while cunningly plotting to hasten its departure. Yet he was valued, as a colleague if not as an enemy, by Lloyd George, a politician as opposite in provenance and temperament as it is possible to imagine. His great strength was that there were few things about which he cared enough to deceive himself. It is for this temperamental detachment and its effect on his contributions to policy, as much as for his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* and other works of philosophy, that he deserves the description of an "intellectual" in politics and government. Previous biographies have barely looked this side of him, and Mackay's well-titled volume is to be welcomed on that count.

Its promise is partly fulfilled. This is, to a remarkable extent, a book written by a scholar for other scholars who know the period and the literature very well. Its avowed intention is to concentrate on documents which other writers have not used and to avoid "lengthy rehearsals" of what has already been published. This self-denying ordinance sometimes has strange results. Balfour's appointment as Prime Minister, so far from being the subject of a lengthy rehearsal, takes place somewhere on the blank half-page between chapters six and seven, with not a hint of discussion or commentary. Mackay's interest in unpublished documents is not that of the "high politics" historian. His main interest is in policy. He makes use of the perspectives of his own earlier work on Admiral Lord Fisher to evaluate Balfour's contribution to defence planning between 1895 and the 1920s. His chapter on the foundation and early work of the Committee of Imperial Defence is one of the most valuable in the book and will be necessary reading for anyone who wishes to understand the watchful, calculating pessimism of pre-war British policy towards Germany, France and Russia. Not everyone will agree with the author that it vindicates Balfour: the incompleteness of the reforms of defence machinery between the Boer War and the war of 1914–18 is perhaps more important than Mackay allows.

The author's other interest is in education. Here the conflict between biography and history is more acute. For many reasons, the 1902 Education Act is important in the history of British education. It created the "Local Education Authority" as a concept; confirmed the indifference of central government to what went on in the state schools, so long as they were operated at minimum cost; and created an entrenched position for the denominational schools from which R. A. Butler had to bribe and charm them when he was trying unsuccessfully to reform the system in 1944. It omitted any constructive encouragement of scientific or technical education in the state system. Balfour's was the primary responsibility for the Bill as it evolved. Mackay makes it painfully clear that his major interest was in preserving the Anglican voluntary schools, and that the Act had the same anti-Radical political significance to Balfour as to the Liberals and to the Nonconformists whose drift to Conservatism was sharply checked in the immediate aftermath of the Act. He contrasts this with Balfour's rather greater interest in the foundation of Imperial College, which would teach science to an élite. This contrast could have been developed in a history of education, and Mackay does indeed develop it, albeit in a rather laboured discussion of the issues of cultural prejudice against industry raised by Wiener's *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*. But there are more penetrating ways in which it might have been developed in a biography, and this opportunity the author seems to have missed.

The central theme of this biography is of Balfour as a rational, indeed an over-rational being. But what the book wholly fails to convey is the sheer complexity and stress of life at the top of the greasy pole, and the impact of stress on rational plans. An example is the discussion of industrial efficiency, identified by the author as the greatest challenge to British educators at the turn of the century. Few will disagree that this was, and remains, a problem. Balfour took a sporadic interest in it, as did most politicians and political writers in the period, when they were not concerned with Ireland, or Church Disestablishment, or the Licensing Act, or Dreadnoughts, or the Taff Vale case or a hundred other things which forced their way on to the political agenda. Mackay's account of Balfour's contribution to solving the problem makes it seem that he was delinquent in pressing home some reforms which he knew to be important: the evidence for his knowledge being a few phrases in correspondence, and the evidence for his delinquency being the inadequacies, measured by abstract and often modern standards, of the policy he put into practice. Perhaps this harping on modern references is intended to bring "relevance" into history. Its effect is to put a wall between the reader and a sympathetic understanding of what it was like to be Balfour. It makes even this reviewer yearn for the minute "high politics" narrative, which could show how the Education Bill, the Irish Land Act, the Licensing Act, back-bench irritation, the conflict for leadership with Chamberlain, and the need for a convincing diplomatic posture towards Germany all combined with one another and made sense from day to day. It need not give primacy to politics, though it probably would. It would have a much firmer base in narrative than this biography possesses. The alternative chosen by Mackay makes little sense of Balfour and not enough sense of anything else.

Disgrace and favour

Isabel Colegate

GUY NEVILL
Exotic Groves: A portrait of Lady Dorothy Nevill
208pp. Michael Russell. £9.95.
0 85955 114 8

Lady Dorothy Nevill was born in 1826. She was the daughter of Horatio, third Earl of Orford, and was thus able to count Horace Walpole among her ancestors. She died in 1913, having in the course of her life met, and in many cases become a close friend of, an enormous number of the interesting personalities of her time, from Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain to Darwin and the great botanist Sir William Hooker. Surprisingly, she was never received at the court of Queen Victoria. Guy Nevill, her descendant, who has written her biography in an amusingly irreverent but at the same time scholarly manner, has unearthed the scandal which was responsible for this exclusion.

As a young unmarried girl she fell for a beautiful and doomed charmer. George Smythe, who was supposed to have been the model for Disraeli's Coningsby. Dorothy was discovered alone in a summerhouse with this notorious seducer, and her reputation was lost. She was more or less confined to the house by her frantic parents, and Smythe left for the Continent. When he returned he was once again received everywhere, but Dorothy was considered fatally compromised. He died at the age of forty-one, worn out by his excesses. By that time Dorothy, to the confusion of her critics and the vast relief of her parents, had married her cousin Reginald Nevill, who was rich and well-connected, if a trifle dull.

The newly married pair bought Dangstein, a neo-Grecian house near Godalming, and Dorothy soon organized an establishment of wonderfully Victorian lavishness, to which huge numbers of visitors were asked. She sent Disraeli strawberries from her garden; for, apart from social life Dorothy's great interest was horticulture. With thirty-five gardeners working for her, she transformed the gardens at Dangstein, establishing herbaceous borders (long before Miss Jekyll), orchid houses, conservatories, an arboretum, aviaries. Her three surviving children sometimes seemed to take second place to her plants, if not to her dogs, birds, silkworms, tortoises, donkeys and – her other abiding enthusiasm – the paper mosaic work with which she skilfully decorated endless albums of photographs and mementoes. Queen Victoria's death meant that at last she was received at Court, but she disliked the Edwardian age, deeply disapproving of the talk of Home Rule for Ireland and votes for women, horrified by the threat to the House of Lords, enraged by Lloyd George's National Insurance Act which was going to make her lick a stamp for every servant she had, and appalled by Mrs Mossockle, the rich widow who had invegled Society to her musical parties – "we have indeed sunk low".

Nevertheless she enjoyed life to the end, comforted by a delightful new friendship with a sophisticated schoolboy, Edward. Cazalet. When she died at the age of eighty-seven there were over two hundred obituaries. Her descendant's lively book appropriately commemorates a vigorous Victorian personality.

The weakness of wealth

Anthony Howard

MICHAEL DROSNIN
Citizen Hughes
532pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
0 09 161130 X

When Howard Hughes died on April 5, 1976, if the lights did not go down in the newsrooms of the West, they certainly should have done. Few men have ever done more for the circulation of newspapers – or, indeed, for the sales of pulp fiction. For nearly two decades the legend of the aviator playboy who became the world's most eccentric recluse had served as the modern equivalent of a medieval morality play. Indeed, in some respects, it incorporated touches that even a pre-Reformation churchman might have hesitated to introduce – the hair and nails that grew to Straw Peter lengths, the horror (in a former libertine) of any form of bodily contact, the acquisition of vast treasure that brought in its wake nothing but an ever-increasing fear of corruption caused, in this case, not by moth and rust but by germs and bacteria.

Like the General in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*, Hughes, long before his death, had become a man dominated by his own private war against "contamination", as represented in particular by "impure fluids". This led him eventually to take some unexpected public attitudes, of which his implacable opposition to further American nuclear tests was perhaps the least predictable. When these latter became an active threat to his own adopted state of Nevada, his indignation knew no bounds; personal anxieties and political resentments – he had turned the gambling city of Las Vegas virtually into his personal fief – forced him, however improbably, to fight alongside the environmentalists. He remained, though, one with a difference: where his fellow-campaigners relied on the democratic processes of persuasion, he chose to pin his faith to the bully-pulpit power of his bank balance.

Alas, he had no luck. Despite his brandishing of his cheque book, no fewer than four successive nuclear tests took place in Nevada between 1968 and 1970, when Hughes finally shook its dust off his feet and left in terror for the Bahamas (to be driven from there, in turn, by the dumping of nerve gases 150 miles away out in the Atlantic). After that, the hermit had, perforce, to become a nomad – popping up, by turns, in Vancouver, London and Acapulco before dying, an emaciated skeleton on a stretcher, aboard an aeroplane flying above his original home town of Houston, at the age of seventy.

Michael Drosnin's book is is no sense a biography, although it does cover fairly fully the last ten years of Howard Hughes's life. Designed an an exposé, it is, in fact, more of a monograph on the limitation of money as an instrument of power in American politics. Not, of course, that Mr Drosnin himself sees it that way. Carried away by his good fortune in discovering a cache of stolen Howard Hughes documents (this time, unlike Clifford Irving's, seemingly authentic), he is determined to assert that what they reveal is not just "the intimate journal of one man's descent into madness" but "a cold-blooded tale of an entire nation's corruption".

Drosnin labours manfully to prove his case, throwing in everything from Watergate to the love-life of Senator Edward Kennedy, but his evidence never quite sustains his apocalyptic tone. Stripped of its hyperbole, his narrative would seem to demonstrate an entirely different conclusion: that, even in the United States, an enormously wealthy man (albeit a dotty one) has practically no chance of bending politicians to his will.

If, however, Drosnin fails to prove his central thesis, he at least has some telling vignettes to offer along the way. He is particularly good on Hubert Humphrey, the oddly flawed and vulnerable 1968 Democratic presidential nominee, with whom Hughes's anti-nuclear crusade made its greatest headway. Even here, though, Drosnin's own narrative includes at least one healthily sceptical remark. "Hubert", said LBJ in his characteristically earthy way, "had better keep his pants zipped or he's going to get caught with his pecker in Hughes's pocket." There may be something coarse, especially from a President, in the tone of a remark like that: on the other hand, it hardly suggests a political system which has allowed itself, coldbloodedly or otherwise, to become corrupt.

The one scalp, in fact, that Drosnin can claim effectively to have made off with is that of the Democratic Party's former chairman, Larry O'Brien. Not only was he the essential link in all contacts between Hughes and Humphrey: he also provides the involuntary connection between Hughes and Watergate. So furious was Richard Nixon, according to Drosnin, at the unfairness of life that allowed O'Brien to be on Hughes's payroll and yet get away with it – while he himself had been plagued by charges about his links with Hughes ever since 1960 – that his resentment eventually boiled over into sanctioning the Watergate break-in.

It is by no means the first time such a motive has been offered for Watergate – though, interestingly, the suggestion has always, until now, tended to come from within the Nixon camp. The reason for that should be obvious enough. In any choice of "least bad options", an explanation that satisfactorily buries the entire memory of the Nixon administration's treatment of Daniel Ellsberg (and his psychiatrist) over the wholly separate affair of the "Pentagon Papers" plainly has much to commend it, at least to former Nixon supporters. Why, though, should it attract an ex-*Washington Post* and ex-*Wall Street Journal* reporter like Drosnin? Not, one hopes, merely because it happened to provide a convenient QED for an otherwise fragile thesis about the influence of one man's money on US politics.

A matter of survival

April FitzLyon

GALINA VISHNEVSKAYA
Galina: A Russian story
519pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £14.95.
0 340 36036 4

Prima donnas' autobiographies are not usually notable for political and social comment; but Galina Vishnevskaya was born in the Soviet Union, where art and politics can never be divorced, and her autobiography is rather different from the usual chronicle of a diva's ovations, love affairs and quarrels, although it is not totally devoid of that kind of thing.

She has had an exceptionally hard life. Born in 1926, the daughter of a drunken father and a promiscuous and inadequate mother, she was brought up by her impoverished peasant grandmother. As a child, Galina lived through famine, collectivization and purges; as an adolescent, she lived through the 900 days of the German blockade of Leningrad, doing heavy manual labour on a starvation diet, and witnessing and enduring the terrible sufferings which that siege imposed. Somehow, she survived. She survived the death of her baby from starvation and lack of medicaments. She survived tuberculosis – a dire threat to a singer – and, being Russian, regained her will to live by re-reading Turgenev's novels. She survived touring the provinces as a music-hall singer. She lived through Zhdanov's attacks on "formalism", and the persecution of Prokofiev, Shostakovich and many lesser artists.

Eventually, with little training and a great deal of talent, aged twenty-five, she was taken on at the Bolshoi Theatre, where she quickly rose to taking principal parts – Aida, Leonora, Tatiana – and where she was to spend the next twenty-two years as the Soviet Union's greatest prima donna. She was decorated by the Party, and mixed with top people: Brezhnev, good company and fond of quoting Esenin; Zhukov, dour and angry. But, although she had become a member of the privileged Soviet élite, there were still trials to be endured. She survived singing to Stalin who, on the whole, was relatively indulgent to the Bolshoi. She survived singing at drinking parties in the Kremlin; she survived the slimy intentions of the KGB, and the amorous attentions of Bulganin. She became one of the Soviet Union's most valuable exports, sought after all over the world, a splendid advertisement for her country's cultural achievements. Yet, when Britten chose her – and thus honoured her country – as the soprano soloist in his *War Requiem*, a work dedicated to peace, her government would not allow her to take part in the first performance at Coventry Cathedral because Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, a German, was also singing.

When Vishnevskaya was at her peak as an artist, she was suddenly deprived of all her roles, her name expunged from the annals of the Bolshoi and from recordings, because her husband, the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, had had the courage to write to the press in defence of Solzhenitsyn. They were eventually deprived of their Soviet citizenship. The Soviet Union's loss was the West's gain.

This is a bitter book, written more in anger than in sorrow, a passionate indictment of the Soviet system. Vishnevskaya is tough. No punches are pulled; informers and sycophants are identified; names are named. Vishnevskaya writes more about treachery, moral corruption and official thuggery and philistinism than she does about music, although there are sympathetic sketches of Britten, Rostropovich and, particularly, of Shostakovich, and some comments about her work at the Bolshoi and abroad. *Galina* has no literary pretensions; and, although the American translation may be accurate – there is no way of telling – the language used is that of tabloid journalism. Yet the book has a directness and readability which should make it appeal to a wide audience, to people who may not have read more subtle accounts of life in the Soviet Union. Many in the West could read it with profit – for example, those here who are keen for more state aid and involvement in the arts. Vishnevskaya tells us that the Bolshoi was never short of money; yet the repertoire was limited, and artists exploited and manipulated.

Is it too much to hope that the new leadership in the Kremlin may at last realize how the Soviet government's philistine and repressive attitude to the arts – an attitude which, during the last sixty-eight years has driven so many great artists of all kinds to suicide, prison, exile or silence – has impoverished the cultural heritage of a great and talented nation, has been totally counter-productive from the régime's point of view, and made that régime forfeit the respect of civilized people both inside and outside the Soviet Union?

Tireless tenor

Rupert Christiansen

DANIEL SNOWMAN
The World of Plácido Domingo
298pp. Bodley Head. £15.
0 370 30522 1

When Plácido Domingo's ghosted autobiography appeared two years ago, there was a feeling that the blandness with which it presented an attractive, well-balanced, guileless man who also managed a career as "the world's greatest tenor", was unpalatable, if not plain incredible. But Daniel Snowman's sharp, candid and entertaining new book, which follows Domingo's progress between June 1981 and January 1984, rather confirms the picture. Snowman analyses every aspect of the phenomenon, from contractual wranglings to stage-door adulation, and through it all shows Domingo keeping himself in a state of grace. He has no hidden frustrations, loneliness, tantrums; the secret is that he is compulsively gregarious, a natural performer whose psyche runs on the desire to make everyone love him, and he has never lost his pleasure in working at what he does superlatively well.

Perhaps his most astonishing characteristic is his ability to weather ceaseless travelling without apparent mental or vocal strain – in one of the months covered here, he sings in New York, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Mexico, New York again, Spain and Bregenz. Birgit Nilsson once remarked that although a brilliant linguist, Domingo has yet to learn to say "no" in any language. Snowman believes, however, that there is considerable method and pacing behind his schedule: even so, one can't help wondering whether at some level avarice and vanity do not occasionally get the upper hand over dedication to art.

The forays into middle-of-the-road popular music excite stronger reservations. What is the point of Domingo wasting his energies on music which can get on perfectly well without him, when the world is crying out for his Tristan? Snowman is a bit soft on Domingo here, taking the unconvincing line that Caruso did it too, that it brings new audiences into the opera house, and so on. Perhaps it would be better to forget about Caruso and concentrate on the great Polish tenor Jean de Reszke, who worked his elegant lyric voice into an instrument capable of the most subtle and and beautiful interpretations of the Heldentenor repertory. It is here, not with the anodyne Lloyd Webber, that Domingo's nobler destiny must lie.

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"... *his work is truly incisive; intriguingly, he is able to open doors to comprehending the nature of everyday sensibilities in the nineteenth century.*" **Booklist**
1985 hb xvii + 191pp £20.05 – 0 208 02044 6

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Mark Popovsky with a Foreword by Andrei Sakharov
Vavilov was an outstanding geneticist, internationally recognised for his theoretical and practical work as a botanist, after Pavlov he was the best known Soviet scientist of his day. In the late 1930s he became the object of a systematic campaign by his former protege Lysenko, who persuaded Stalin that Vavilov was responsible for the disastrous failure of Soviet agriculture that followed collectivisation. In 1940 Vavilov was arrested, tortured and sentenced to death; he died in January 1943 of malnutrition. This book is the only account based on secret NKVD records of Vavilov's interrogation and trial.
1985 hb viii + 216pp £21.40 – 0 208 02035 7

CDS *55 St. Thomas' Street, Oxford OX1 1JG Telephone (0865) 250333*

A change of scene

Howard Colvin

JOHN ORRELL
The Theatres of Inigo Jones and John Webb
218pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0 521 25546 5

Sixty years ago W. Grant Keith (with J. A. Gotch the pioneer of Jonesian studies) could write, "We know nothing of Inigo Jones as a theatre architect in the modern sense." Thanks to the work of Simpson and Bell, Glynne Wickham, Eleanore Boswell, John Peacock, Don Rowan and others, that is no longer true. We know enough for John Orrell to follow up his own illuminating articles on the subject by a full-length book, one moreover in which he has successfully bridged the gap between the historians of drama and the historians of architecture that makes theatre history so difficult to write. For how many of the former can understand plans and elevations, modules and scales, how many of the latter are familiar with backstage and forestage or know the difference between "standing scenes" and "scenes of relieve"?

The subject of this book is the English Court theatre of the seventeenth century, and it begins with the temporary theatre set up in the Hall at Christ Church in Oxford for the royal visit of 1605. It was constructed by the king's carpenters from Whitehall under the direction of Simon Basil, the Comptroller of his Works, and the scenes were designed by one "Mr. Jones a great Traveller". This theatre, dating from the outset of Jones's career as an artist and architect, is therefore of particular interest. Hitherto it has been known only from the somewhat hostile account of a spectator from Cambridge, but Orrell has found in the British Library a plan and a section of an auditorium which he convincingly identifies as the one proposed for Christ Church Hall. What it shows is an Italianate theatre of the kind illustrated in Serlio's *Secondo libro di perspettiva* (1545), complete with a rudimentary "portico" at the rear (made of hoops and fir-poles) and a raked stage which (as we know from other sources) was flanked by revolving "machines" which could be made to present three different sides to the audience in turn, thus enabling the scene to be changed three times in the course of the performance. Those triangular machines were the *periaktoi* of the classical theatre (described by Vitruvius) and this was the first time they had been seen on an English Court stage. Here, then, we already have in 1605 something quite different from the primitive "wooden O" of the Elizabethan theatres. The man who ten years later was to begin to transform English architecture, had already been instrumental in transforming the English theatre.

In the next chapter we are transported to the Cockpit Theatre in Drury Lane. In recent years a consensus of scholarly opinion has concluded that this is the building represented by a set of designs among Inigo Jones's drawings at Worcester College, Oxford. Although absolute proof is still lacking, Orrell demonstrates that although this was a private venture and not a Court theatre, it was remodelled in 1616 in circumstances in which the involvement of Inigo Jones is entirely understandable. The result was something similar in plan to the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford (which may indeed have owed something to its example), but with the adequate space for a stage which the latter building lacked. Here, probably for the first time in England, there was an architectural *frons scenae*, with limited scope for perspective "scenes" or stage sets framed by the central archway. Indeed, if Orrell is right, we have Jones's sketch for one such scene, made in 1639 for an unknown play. "The sketch", he concludes, "is the earliest surviving scene design for the professional theatre in England." Be that as it may, the Cockpit Theatre can now be seen as an important exemplar of the classical theatre outside the Court which survived (in altered form) until the Great Fire.

From the Cockpit in Drury Lane we move on to the Cockpit in Whitehall Palace, where in 1629 Jones converted the octagonal room in which Henry VIII watched his gamecocks tear one another to pieces into what he called a "Theatridion" or little theatre, complete with figures of Melpomene and Thalia, the Muses of tragedy and comedy, and busts of Thespis and Epicharmus, the reputed founders of those arts. The result was a miniature Palladian theatre, with an elegant *frons scenae* of two orders (Corinthian and Composite) incorporating five doorways for theatrical entries and exits. Here, moreover, the auditorium was clearly differentiated from the stage, making a complete break with the Elizabethan theatre, whose characteristic interpenetration of stage and auditorium still persisted at the Cockpit in Drury Lane.

Palladio's Teatro Olimpico is even more obviously the inspiration of another, as yet unidentified, scheme for a classical theatre, hitherto mistakenly attributed to Inigo Jones, but in fact by his pupil John Webb. Here a great triumphal arch dominated the stage, leaving relatively little space for the changing "scenes" which afforded Jones so much scope for his invention. In thus subordinating theatrical artifice to architectural effect Webb incurs the censure of Orrell, who contrasts his more rigid adherence to Palladian rules with Jones's greater adaptability to circumstances. Webb, he writes, always tends to "play the geometer", showing a preoccupation with modular proportion that is less apparent in Jones's drawings.

Orrell himself has played the geometer to some purpose in this book. His meticulous study of scales and dimensions (some of them far from clearly indicated on the original drawings) is basic to all his identifications, and informs everything he writes. This book is a reminder that compass and scales have ever been the architect's tools, and must equally be those of the architectural historian. But interesting though it is to realize that the setting out of the Tudor Cockpit by Henry VIII's workmen was a perfect example of "the medieval *ad quadratum* method", and valuable though it is to have the modular framework of Jones's and Webb's theatrical designs expounded, too much *aesthetic* importance should not be attached to these techniques of architectural design. There is very little reason to think a careful adherence to such a system of proportion in plan or elevation was apprehended by a Stuart audience, least of all in a theatre where banked-up seats, a raked stage, scenic artifice and artificial light all served to obscure the basic geometry. A sophisticated system of proportion was no more a guarantee of beauty in the work of a Renaissance architect than in that of Le Corbusier. In the case of Inigo Jones it was no doubt part of his assertion of intellectual parity with writers such as Ben Jonson, in that of Webb one of those professional secrets of which, after the Restoration, he was to be the jealous guardian in a new world of gentlemen architects.

Inigo Jones's scene design of 1639 for the Cockpit, Drury Lane. This freely drawn sketch of a full scenic stage set up behind a proscenium arch, with wings, cloud borders in an upper stage and a "citti di rileve" before a backcloth, clearly shows the main parts of the scenic structure, including a stage roll apparently in the same plane as the proscenium arch. The drawing recalls Jones's contemporary work for the Whitehall masques; it is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

ARCHON BOOKS

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Ronald Blythe, *New York Times Book Review*
February 1985 hb xxvi + 309pp £31.75 – 0 208 02011 X

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1984 hb vii + 288pp £27.25 – 0 208 01989 8

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Whoppers and warnings

Andrew Hislop

PETER CAREY
Illywhacker
600pp. Faber. £9.95.
0 571 13207 3

Peter Carey's first published novel, *Bliss*, began with a death, that of Harry Joy, a benign, complacent advertising executive who has inherited some of the talents, or at least some of the tales, of his story-telling father. This innocent *bon vivant* finds life after death to be Hell as he is forced to relive his veneered metropolitan existence – but with its unpleasant truths now revealed to him.

Carey's massive, ambitious new novel, *Illywhacker*, a comic mixture of myth and history, tall stories of small town life and telling moralities of city society, starts with a painfully and implausibly extended life: "My name is Herbert Badgery. I am a hundred and thirty-nine years old. . . . It is hard to believe that you can feel so bad and still not die." Badgery also tells tales – whoppers. He is a true illywhacker: conman, trickster, liar ("illywhacker" derives, according to *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, from "spieler", teller of tales, swindler) – and our narrator.

We are in untrustworthy hands. Tricks are played on us. Badgery slips in and out of the first person narrative. "You have invented yourself Mr Badgery. . . . You can be anything you want", says one of his admirers. Not only Badgery; every character is subject to his whims, even when he is off-stage. They may intrude on the narrative, like another of his lovers, to complain in a letter that he has got things wrong, but their dissent is by his special permission. Death forces upon Joy a reassessment of his subjective view of the world; Badgery's extended life reduces the world to his subjectivity.

For the most part, we are only too glad to have him along as guide. The pity is that the humorous zest of his exploits as youthful but balding trickster are not sustained and he is allowed, if not to die, at least to age into enervation and physical decay. The other characters, not having his narrative authority, can never quite replace him on the stage.

The attenuation of Badgery as a dramatic presence (though not as spieler) coincides with the gradual change in the background of *Illywhacker* from a broad, rollicking historical canvas to a cramped, futuristic vision whose menacing symbolic luggage is lightened only by black comedy. We should have been prepared for this. Badgery swears that he is not lying about his age and says that in 1919 he was thirty-three; in which case, at the beginning of the novel, he is already teasing us from the twenty-first century. Joy at least was allowed to end his days in a rural, hippy paradise. Badgery has to stick around, a pained, caged exhibit in the "Best Pet Shop in the World" (run for Mitsubishi by his Japanesque grandson, Hisao) to warn us about what's in store.

Illywhacker ends in familiar Carey territory, so successfully delineated in his short stories which economically summon up other worlds far from, yet very near to our own. What is unusual, however, is that it takes 600 pages to get there, and that those pages are preoccupied with a place, only too well known to Carey, which he has hitherto almost completely ignored in his writing: his native Australia.

The locations of Carey's earlier work are mostly nameless or imaginary, often defined only by their relation to another country – usually the Mecca of his modern materialist nightmares, America. This perspective is "colonial" in that its authority depends on the values, accepted or rejected, of an outside power. *Bliss* is situated in "the outposts of the American Empire". The stories "American Dreams" and "A Windmill in the West", about an American guard on a foreign US base, are also parables of a "colonized" culture. Australia makes an appearance in "The Puzzling Nature of Blue", but only as itself the colonizer of a group of islands.

Not surprisingly, themes of colonization abound in *Illywhacker*; colonization is a kind of confidence trick, a game of false identities. Australia is explored in relation to other economically dominant powers – first the British, then the Americans and, predicatively, the Japanese. The country itself, we are reminded, was founded on a lie: that Australia was unoccupied, or at least uncultivated, by its aborigines. "It is a black man's country", says Leah Goldstein, one of Badgery's girlfriends. "We can only move around like tourists. The blackfeller can rest but we must keep moving." *Illywhacker*, however, does not settle down with the black residents but follows the tourists. There are a host of them: Germans such as Ernie Vogel, embarrassed by his nationality; Irish such as the wealthy McGraths, whose poetaster daughter, Phoebe, Badgery bigamously marries only to have her abandon him and their two children, Charles and Sonia, for an epileptic versifier and a Sapphic schoolteacher; Chinese such as Goon Tse Ying, who adopts Badgery as a boy and teaches him how to disappear; Jews such as the Goldsteins, whose daughter Leah, medical student turned snake dancer, has a theatrical, as well as sexual, double act with Badgery but returns to her husband Izzie Kaletsky, son of a failed scrap metal merchant, brother of a Russian revolutionary, when he loses his legs promoting a left-wing cause; Americans such as the entrepreneur Nathan Schick, who finances Badgery's theatricals and his son's pet business.

These are but a few of a cast of hundreds in a book dizzy with movement. Our picaresque narrator apart, what holds this erupting conglomeration together and promotes its themes is the persistent symbolic juxtaposition and curious symbiosis of two essentials of our lives, whose relationship Carey has already explored in such stories as "Exotic Pleasures": animals and machines.

The links between machinery and colonization in *Illywhacker* are direct and obvious. Badgery, aviator and reluctant salesman for Henry Ford, ditches his plane near the picnicing family of Jack McGrath whom he involves in a fanciful plan to build an Australian aeroplane. The project fails because of lack of support from Anglophile backers. A mechanical genius of a farmer also fails to get finance for his new plough. General Motors is given Australian money to build an Australian car but takes the profits out of the country.

This "politics" of machinery is, however, from the first bound up with the symbolism of the animal kingdom. Badgery on landing bags a snake "as silky as 50 SAE motor oil". (As this literary ark fills up, the snake becomes a symbol of the untamed, uncolonized, as opposed to domesticated, mastered animals such as "chooks".) Badgery throws it at the crypto-English would-be plane financiers whom he regards as "rabbits" that the country should be rid of. He tells Jake, who later dies from a snake-bite, of a serpent that makes itself into a wheel before attack, and us of a plane, succulent with castor oil, eaten by cows. Humans, whose copulating, excreting animality is emphasized, are also directly connected to machines. Phoebe's mother, Molly, keeps her sanity with an electric belt that Badgery takes to wearing.

With the failure, however, of Badgery's mechanical indigenes to get off the ground, the animal ones, in particular a host of parrots, rosellas and cockatoos, are increasingly the focus of national identity. Man and beast become, with the help of magic *and* economics, more and more symbolically entwined.

A cryptic schema such as this does injustice, though, to the dazzling heterogeneity of Carey's work. *Illywhacker* has many brilliant moments but in the end it overreaches itself. The performance cannot be sustained, and there is something unsatisfactory about the reduction of the broad canvas. It seems almost a form of fictional "colonialism", as though Carey's imagination had occupied his homeland, and made hilarious use of whatever it offered, only to deprive it of its vibrant identity by imposing his symbolic interpretation on it. But then there are snakes such as Ouroboros who belie the masterful independence of their species by biting their own tails.

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Shooting her

Linda Taylor

DAVID HARSENT
From an Inland Sea
182pp. Viking. £8.95.
0 670 80395 2

The more one reads between the lines of David Harsent's novel (and if one isn't already doing so, one is obliquely instructed to by the male protagonist's examination of a book "which he read with a concentrated care that involved a refusal to allow any passage to be scanned for its narrative drift alone"), the more one is aware of the layers of fiction that he has constructed. *From an Inland Sea* explores the relationship between a man and a woman, both un-named, over four years (the book is divided into time sequences: "The Second Year – July"; "The Fourth Year – April" and so on). It is written in the third person but with a strong indication that it is the man, "He", who is really the narrator.

This involves a subtle shifting of perspective which, enhanced by the anonymity of the protagonists, blurs and intensifies the reader's vision as we enter the partial world where fiction and reality overlap – the world inside our heads. "He" and "she" occupy a space without clear references: we don't know what they do or where they live. Everything that is observed, then, has to speak – for itself, and volumes.

Towards this end, Harsent employs recognizable internal and external devices to trap moments, capture scenes. "He" invents a sequence of "her" unfaithfulness: "The video in his head clicked and the tape started to roll." On other occasions, "he" describes scenes that he is studying as if he were the director of a film and the people in the park (or wherever) were characters that he can manipulate: "The director sent them for tea in the nearby shop – an impromptu scene." More intricately, a sequence in which "she" is raped and "he" slashes (probably kills) the rapist turns out not to have happened, except in his imagination: she had been asleep while they drove through the countryside. The dual impressions of the afternoon, however, parallel a later time in Venice where she is found in church while he witnesses a man beating his wife. The point, which is constantly re-stated (he's always stoning dogs and foxes, locking her in cupboards, punching her in the stomach – inside his head, at least), is one about his impotent aggression which she, necessarily (by being asleep, in church, absent), fails to notice. The only real shooting of her that he does is with a camera. As the time scheme intensifies ("The Fifth Year – 29 September–5 October") and as his behaviour becomes more aggressively dissipated, his need to possess this cool, strong, professional woman becomes obsessive: he collects a little bagful of intimate relics; he takes pictures of her every movement. The last moments of their relationship are appropriately seen through a camera lens.

The novel resembles in its effect her description of a nightmare: "sort of disconnected. It didn't all happen in order. You know: dreams. You think that if you concentrate it'll all come back – a narrative. But they're not like that. There were other bits" – and its title provides a touchstone for the dream references. In May of the third year, they drive to an inland sea on the island where they are holidaying (most of the novel takes place outside the home, producing, again, the effect of snapshots or film sets or dream sequences). The landlocked beach with its ice-cream shop, and the sea, fed by a tunnel of salt water, are cut off from but curiously reminiscent of the real world, "like something remembered from a dream".

Harsent's self-consolous method draws attention to the way in which novels can be technically crafty. He is not alone in producing imaginative landscapes or curious perspectives, but while the detective work demanded of the reader is often more confusing than it is rewarding, the novel contains some startlingly vivid depictions of behaviour, gesture and the peculiar alliance of couples. And like an album of carefully arranged photographs – with their odd, enigmatic mixture of implied intimacies and stated special events – the novel is interesting less for the dislocated story it tells than for the profile it builds of the narrator/protagonist – the creator of the album.

Unsuitable attachments

Savkar Altinel

DIANA O'HEHIR
I Wish This War Were Over
278pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press. £8.95.
0 7011 29530

In the winter of 1944, with a leopard-skin coat draped over her shoulders, a suitcase in one hand and a copy of Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry* in the other, nineteen-year-old Helen Reynolds leaves her Berkeley home and boards the first in a series of trains which will take her across America to Washington, DC, where her mother Selma, Spanish Civil War widow, unlucky chaser of men and alcoholic, is once again "having difficulty with the reality principle". The somewhat worn leopard-skin is in fact one of Selma's cast-offs, and so is Lieutenant John O'Connell, a peacetime union organizer turned Transport Corps officer, whom Helen runs into before she has even had a chance to find a seat in the crowded carriage. The extent to which the young woman is her mother's daughter becomes clear when, having first stabbed the married and middle-aged O'Connell with her nail scissors and then abandoned him briefly in Chicago to visit her old boyfriend Will, she returns and drifts into an affair with him which ends in heartbreak for all.

Diana O'Hehir's characters are people who are incapable of controlling their feelings, who form unsuitable attachments and end up hurting those whom they love. It is all really a kind of generosity, a brimming over, a triumph of colour over form, as in the case of Renoir – the painter whom the rigid and intellectual Will uncharacteristically prefers to all others.

One "objective correlative" for this emotional turmoil is provided by the world war in progress in the background, and another by the chaotic existence of the poor, in whose untidy towns, with their neglected roads and ramshackle buildings, O'Connell continues his organizing. As Helen observes, however, the typical Renoir figure is a voluptuous pink woman. Anarchy is essentially for those of the female sex, and just as Will, whose desire for the cessation of hostilities gives the book its title, cannot tolerate disorder, O'Connell has (his infinitely greater vitality notwithstanding) his own dream of an orderly socialist utopia.

The style of this novel, too, has a voluptuousness which endows the various locations with the same vivid presence as it does the characters. Despite all the sadness, there is also a great deal of humour, making possible acceptance of the fact that leopards will not only not change their spots but pass them on to their offspring as well.

Champagne versus sour grapes

Nigel Cross

ANTHONY BLOND
The Book Book
266pp. Cape. £9.95.
0 224 02074 9

In 1971 Anthony Blond wrote the *Publishing Game*, a snappy guide to the publishing world of the 1960s. It actually lured some dithering young graduates into publishing, and gave their more creative colleagues some useful tips on hawking manuscripts. Now he has written a sequel which misses the opportunity to say anything very interesting about publishing in the 1980s.

The Blond book, as it might more aptly have been titled, is an unsatisfactory mix of anecdote, uninformative lists, interviews with friends and friends of friends, and publishing nuts and bolts. Despite Cape's blurb this is not a book for aspiring writers, who would do much better to buy the *Writers' and Artists' Year Book* at half the price. But if publishers enjoy reading about themselves it is a book for publishers and agents. There is some gossip, none of it very malicious. The portraits of Lord Weidenfeld, Tom Maschler and Carmen Callil are calculated to flatter rather than wound. There is certainly no information here that would tell the book world anything it doesn't already know.

For all that it conspicuously fails as a professional hand-book, it is a chirpy and sometimes entertaining self-portrait. Although Anthony Blond is not a representative publisher (if there is such a thing), he is a wonderful example of a caricature publisher – the sort that features in films and television serials. We see him breakfasting on salmon omelette at the Ritz with Harold Robbins; and again with Robbins at the novelist's villa at Le Cannet, tipping back champagne. Indeed, wherever Blond settles, whether at the Garrick, or at lunch in Rules, or with Lady Celestia Noel at Graham Greene's favourite restaurant in Antibes, or with his "pretty young wife" in Los Angeles, he is invariably waving a champagne bottle. "Publishers do indeed appear to enjoy a fuller life than most of their authors", he writes, ending his book with the remark "we are quite happy thank you very much".

This complacency – or perhaps satisfaction at a job well done – pervades the book. Most of the interviewees catch the tone of smug narcissism. Ed Victor speaks glowingly of and for the successful agent; Tom Maschler praises his decision to take Cape into pop-up publishing; street-wise John Brown junior is dazzled or dazed by rock books; even David Taylor seems to relish the life of an unpublished novelist working in a PR agency.

Such idiosyncratic responses to the publishing world are bound to mislead the unwary. For example, Blond asks A. N. Wilson, briefly literary editor of the *Spectator*, to comment on the world of literary editors. It comes as no surprise to discover that Mr Wilson shares the fashionable view that the *New Statesman* and the *TLS* have "collapsed", but he has obviously never read back-numbers of the *Spectator* and the *Sunday Times*, or he would not assert that reviewing is no longer a "serious matter". Such senior common room rot about declining standards has been with us for centuries.

So what does Blond, a publisher of some repute, actually tell us about books and culture over the last decade? Other publishers have been able to explain their credos and, at the same time, provide a useful survey of their profession: Stanley Unwin, Geoffrey Faber, Siegfried Unseld, Per Gedin. Blond prefers to write in the tradition of the Victorian publisher William Tinsley, whose *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* are amiable, windy and of passing interest to literary historians.

There is a clue to the new spirit however, not only in the dedication of the book to a banker, but also in the amount of space it devotes to the career of its publisher, Tom Maschler of Cape. Cape is a splendid publishing house sustained, Blond believes, not by James Bond (whom he doesn't mention), but by Tom Maschler's sharp eye for the new best-seller. Maschler published Desmond Morris's *Naked Ape* in 1971, and for fiction chose *Catch 22* and *Portnoy's Complaint*. More recently he picked Kit Williams's *Masquerade*, which had tens of thousands of readers digging up the countryside in search of hidden treasure. The latest success story is a pop-up guide to the human body, should you ever need one. There is a pattern here somewhere.

If Anthony Blond's *Book Book* is fun but facile, the "proceedings of the 1985 conference of the working party on library and book trade relations", *Books in Crisis* (National Book League, £15), are certainly not fun, though the debate between Richard Hoggart and Frank Delaney on the future of writing makes for an entertaining scrap. Here too is another publisher, Tom Rosenthal, late of Secker and Warburg and now with André Deutsch. As Mr Rosenthal points out in a marvellously succinct assessment of British publishing, books aren't in crisis at all, but the state of "literary publishing" is "disquieting":

> The wretched sales of most literary fiction, of poetry, of serious biography of interesting but non-stream subjects, of major historical works on subjects other than the world wars, all of these are in deep trouble, at risk of becoming an endangered species. Why is this? In my view it is due to a relentless, callous and remorseless reduction in spending by the State.

By the State, he means publicly funded institutions: the Arts Council, the British Council, libraries and education authorities. There is no inkling of this from the ebullient Mr Blond. Perhaps it is a simple case of champagne versus sour grapes?

"Did you read Connolly on *A Christmas Garland* in the *Sunday Times*, in which he said that of the authors parodied only five were really familiar today . . . 'not because the parodies killed Baring, Benson and Co but . . . because their eclipse forms part of the *general subsidence into oblivion of the whole of English literature*'." George Lyttelton, who made this remark in a letter to Rupert Hart-Davis at the end of 1961, went on to ask "is this really the truth . . . And if so, cannot one say that it always was true? C. implies that 'the leisured reader' is vanishing." The success of the six volumes of the Lyttelton-Hart-Davis correspondence indicates that the species manages to survive, delighting in the sort of writer who is scorned by both the English faculties and thrusting metropolitan publishers.

It was perhaps inevitable that the quirky, endearing aspects of the letters would attract a parody, and a good one would no doubt have been relished by the correspondents themselves and by their enthusiasts. "Brown Craig Brown"'s epistolary novel (*The Marsh Marlowe Letters: Volume One, 1983*. 151pp Heinemann. £6.95) tells of a publisher, Sir Harvey Marlowe, who, while busily writing the George Weidenfeld letters, spirits away the wife, Hyacinth, of his correspondent, the retired Gerald Marsh; the letters continue uninterrupted, and Sir Harvey is only able to extricate himself from the regrettable entanglement by agreeing to publish Marsh's study of music-hall catch-phrases and also Hyacinth's collection of recipes, *The Beauty of Blancmange*.

The creakings of this skeleton are scarcely muffled by continual remarks about assorted *literati* and "media" people of the 1980s. Inventive though it is to discern "the much neglected *humanity* of Clive James", the running joke about his correspondence with Mother Teresa (who turns out to be Vincent Teresa, the celebrated *mafioso*) soon wearies; similarly, the reference to Enid Blyton – "are you a 'Five' or a 'Seven' man?" – raises an initial smile which soon droops as the remark is flogged for more than it is worth. By the end one is left with the impression that the book springs from the superficial knowledge that the author claims to be satirizing; in his muddling of A. J. Ayer and Anita Harris he appears to speak with greater authority about the latter.

Christopher Hawtree

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Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

Later this summer the Society of Authors plans to invite applications for the first grants from the Authors' Foundation, established on the Society's centenary last year. £5,000 will be available to assist non-fiction writers – principally biographers and historians – with the expense of travel and research on commissioned books. It is expected that two grants of £2,500 will be made.

The Foundation's trustees, Antonia Fraser and Michael Holroyd, are making great efforts to raise sufficient funds to enable it to go beyond this admittedly small start. So far a £60,000 has been found, plus a further £40,000 in covenants, but the Foundation would like to have capital at half a million pounds. Until now the bulk of the money has come from writers themselves, among then Jeffrey Archer, Melvyn Bragg, Catherine Cookson, Frederick Forsyth, Philip Larkin, Doris Lessing and Angus Wilson. Eric Ambler has assigned his entire PLR earnings to the Foundation. But publishing houses have been less generous.

Although there have been considerable donations from Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Mills & Boon, Pan and some others – plus a large sum from W. H. Smith – the Foundation has yet to hear from such giants as Penguin (who have recently acquired Michael Joseph, Hamish Hamilton, Rainbird and Sphere) and Associated Book Publishers (the new owners of Routledge and Kegan Paul). Fabers have so far declined. The entire Chatto – Cape – Bodley Head – Virago group could only manage £250.

Michael Holroyd believes that the lack of support from publishers is due to a misunderstanding of the purposes of the scheme. The idea is not to milk publishers' funds while encouraging them to pay poor advances. "The critical point is that if we get the Foundation going properly it enables publishers to commission books that they couldn't afford because the research would need such big advances. It also means the cover price of the books will be brought down. But we still expect publishers to make good contracts."

Non-fiction writers do relatively less well in terms of prizes and grants than novelists, and the cost of their research has increased spectacularly. The Phoenix Trust does what it can on a capital of about £30,000 (moves are afoot to merge the Phoenix with the Authors' Foundation). The Arts Council, with its new faith in sponsorship and lack of faith in bursaries, might consider subsidizing a full-time fund raiser for the Foundation. The Arts Council argues that literature is supported by a healthy publishing industry, but the Foundation's discovery that for every £1 subscribed by an author the rest of the book world has produced less than 50p shows once again that the true subsidy comes from the artists themselves.

* * *

A new literary prize has been announced that will go some way towards redressing the balance between fiction and non-fiction. Hamish Hamilton are launching a £2,000 prize for a book about the performing arts, including music, ballet, opera, the theatre, film and television. It will be called the Roger Machell Prize, in memory of the Hamish Hamilton editor who supervised the publication of their music and theatre lists until his death in 1984. The first award, for a book published this year, will be made in February 1986. The judges are Peter Ackroyd, Michael Ratcliffe and Hilary Spurling. (Three copies of each entry should be submitted by the publishers to reach the Awards Secretary, The Society of Authors, 84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB, not later than November 30.)

* * *

When the independent think-tank, the Policy Studies Institute, published *Facts About the Arts* in 1983 the major conclusion from this first-ever statistical survey of our cultural life was that there were no facts about the arts – at least, none that could be helpful in settling the pressing question of the economic usefulness of the arts to our society. Now the Policy Studies Institute has been engaged jointly by the Ministry of Arts and the Gulbenkian Foundation to tackle precisely that issue.

John Myerscough, the economist who will be conducting the enquiry, admits the difficulty of making statistical evaluations of an activity where aesthetic and cultural values are more important. "The data we provide can be used in any direction, by all those who work in and for and – sometimes – against the arts". But the information supplied in *Facts About the Arts* (a second edition is in preparation), does improve the quality of the arguments. It throws out some that are no longer possible once you have the data. For instance, it is not really possible to argue that *in aggregate* public expenditure on the arts has been reduced. It has been redistributed, but that is not the same thing.

In two year's time we should have something like a profit-and-loss account for the country's cultural investment. Myerscough will be analysing the contribution of the arts to employment, to foreign earning (including tourism), the "fiscal trade-off" between money given in subsidy and recouped in tax, and the economic relationship of the subsidized and commercial sectors of the arts. He will also be conducting a number of case studies on the impact of the arts in selected regions, especially the ability of arts facilities "to light candles in gloomy places" and contribute to the rehabilitation of an area. He is curious to discover why sports facilities are an automatic and unquestioned provision, but the arts are not.

Myerscough is studiously neutral about the conclusions that may be drawn. He denies that there is anything Thatcherite in trying to treat the arts like a business. "You don't surrender the other arguments, I don't even set them aside." He sees it as just an additional benefit to be able to talk about the arts in purely economic terms. It seems likely that when at last the facts *are* known, they will be used to persuade the hard heads in the Treasury and local government that the arts are not a luxury, but a sound investment.

For someone so interested in the cash nexus, John Myerscough is remarkably coy about how much the investigation is going to cost, but I understand that it will be not less than £100,000, of which £30,000 comes from the Arts Ministry. A dance company or theatre could do a lot with £100,000, but that is not the sort of comparison Myerscough is in business to make.

* * *

With the future of the Arts Council's Literature Department at best uncertain, it is pleasing to be able to report that the Arts Council has kept its commitment to poetry by allocating £36,000 to launch a sales service for poetry and other small presses. (It is less pleasing to report that this is the only new scheme undertaken by the Literature Department this year.)

Password Ltd is the answer to a small publisher's prayers. There is a general conviction that a market for poetry exists, yet few small presses can afford even freelance sales representatives to take their books to the shops. Until a proper outlet can be found, their conviction will remain unproven. Even large-scale publishers with their own sales forces know that the books on their poetry lists tend to be, in sales parlance, "last out of the bag". Password now employs two reps who sell poetry full time. Password's co-ordinator, Sarah Peel, told me, "There are many big bookshops all over the country that have never seen a rep selling exclusively poetry before. In fact I should think none has".

So far more than twenty-five imprints have joined the scheme, among them Anvil, Bloodaxe and Taxus. Those with a turnover of more than £1,000 a year will pay 12½ per cent commission to Password; those with less pay a subscription of £75 a year. It is a measure of the scale of most poetry publishing that fewer than 50 per cent who have joined so far will be paying commission, but Password have achieved a coup by being asked to represent the poetry list of Secker and Warburg, a firm with its own sales team, but which wishes to highlight its relaunched poetry publications in this way.

Password is exclusively a sales operation: it had been planned as a warehousing and despatch service as well, but this proved beyond their immediate resources, and each house will be responsible for its own deliveries. Books will have to meet a minimum production standard, and pamphlets have been excluded. Mindful of the beneficial effects on sales of personal appearances by authors, Password is organizing its own promotional readings, "though we are not going for hype in the way that Fabers do".

All those involved have a personal commitment to the art of poetry that is already paying dividends. It has taken only two years to win the Arts Council's approval, in bureaucratic terms the twinkling of an eye. In a year's time it will be possible to judge if an untapped market exists. It had better: there is no guarantee of a grant for a second year.

* * *

Copies are now available of the first issue of a new literary magazine, *Cary's Vademecum*, or, in its Italian edition, *Il Taccuino di Cary*. It is the branchild of the Italian poet Walter Valeri, who came to London last year with the specific intention of creating a means of communication between the culturally isolated groups of writers and intellectuals he had met on his travels through Europe and Latin America. "Writers no longer know who their readers are; readers no longer know who are the writers."

Cary's Vademecum – the title comes from an eighteenth-century coaching timetable, suggesting conversation and exchange – is being produced by a small collective in London who are using the latest computer technology to continue the traditon of self-publication on their own press. The first English edition contains contributions from Stuart Hood, Ken Loach, Dario Fo, the French historian Jean Chesnaux and the Italian director Eugenio Barba. The Italian edition includes the first Italian translation of James Fenton's "German Requiem".

For a journal with a "progressive left" slant *Cary's Vademecum* may seem a somewhat rarified conception, but Valeri disagrees. "Everything in mass culture is at such a low level of banality that anything outside that discourse is bound to appear élitist. You could say that our programme is neither specifically aesthetic nor political, but concerned with cultural politics."

Cary's Vademecum is available from 1, Branch Road, London E14 at £3 per copy.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 224
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than May 24. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 224" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on May 31.

1 B was damned good-looking. She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's. She started all that. She was built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht, and you missed none of it with that wool jersey.

2 She was tall, not very tall, but as tall as becomes a woman. Her hair in the shadow of her hat may have been any colour . . . . One had with her a sense of conventions; and that she had just been playing six sets of tennis.

3 I noticed that she wore her evening-dress, all her dresses, like sport clothes – there was a jauntiness about her movements as if she had first learned to walk upon golf courses on clean crisp mornings.

Answers:

1 As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I – and then each felt: But how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct with health and energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other?
Virginia Woolf, *Flush*; chapter 1.

2 Personally speaking, sipping is something at which I rather excel, but silence of whatever kind, makes me uncomfortable. I hold the cup several inches away from my face and propel my lips towards the rim in a winsome tapering pout. Simultaneously I roll my eyes into my skull. There was a time – I remember the first occasion particularly – when the whole performance brought a smile to the less flexible lips of Sally Gee.
Ian McEwan, "Reflections of Kept Ape".

3 my body in its excellent black coat never lets me
down
returning to you (as I always will, you know that)
and now
filling myself out with myself, no longer
confused
my panting pushing apart my black lips, but
unmoving
I stand with you braced against the wind.
Thom Gunn, "Yoko".

Competition No 220
Winner: Edward Painter

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* was published in 1982.

Abraham Brumberg's long-playing record *Of Lovers, Dreamers and Thieves – Yiddish Folk Songs from Eastern Europe* was released in 1981.

John Buxton's *Elizabethan Taste* was reprinted in 1983.

A. S. Byatt's new novel, *Still Life*, will be published in June.

John Casey is the author of *The Language of Criticism*, 1966.

S. G. Checkland's *Industry and Ethos, Scotland 1832–1914* appeared last year.

Rupert Christiansen's *Prima Donna* was published earlier this year.

Stephen Clark's books include *The Nature of the Beast*, 1982.

Isabel Colegate's collection of stories, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, will be published shortly.

Howard Colvin's books include *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 1978.

Richard Combs is the editor of The British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

John Cottingham's *Rationalism* was published last year.

Hugh Denman is a lecturer in German and Yiddish Literature at Queen's University, Belfast.

Lucy Ellmann is a regular contributor to *Arts Review*.

D. J. Enright's most recent collection of poems, *Instant Chronicles: A life* will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

April FitzLyon's biography of Lorenzo da Ponte, originally published in 1956, was reissued as a paperback in 1983.

Julian Graffy is a lecturer in Russian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London.

Anita Susan Grossman is the author of Mark Rutherford, 1982.

Anthony Howard is Deputy Editor of the *Observer*.

John Kenyon is Professor of Modern History at the University of St Andrews.

Allen Paterson's most recent book is *Herbs in the Garden*, 1985.

Mark Platts is the author of *Ways of Meaning*, 1979.

S.S. Prawer's Bithell Memorial Lecture, *Coalmoke and Englishmen: A study of verbal caricature*, was published in 1984.

Eric Sams's edition of the anonymous Tudor play *Edmund Ironside* will be published later this year.

Michael Sullivan's *The Arts of China* was republished, in its third edition, in 1983.

Julian Symons is the author of *Critical Observations*, 1981.

T. O. Treadwell is a lecturer in English at the Roehampton Institute of Higher Education.

Geza Vermes's books include *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in perspective*, second edition 1982.

Guy M. Wilson is the author, with A. U. B. Norman, of *Treasures from the Tower of London: An exhibition of arms and armour*, 1981.

Nigel Wood's books include *Oriental Glazes: Their chemistry, origins and re-creation*, 1978.

Hugo Young writes a weekly political column in the *Guardian*.

Letters

'Fair of Speech'

Sir, – Anthony Burgess's review of *Fair of Speech*, edited by D. J. Enright (April 12), is entertainingly full of common sense and esoteric knowledge. He is wrong, though, in saying that "calling an ugly fish a *bonito*" is "pure apotropaic magic". Apotropaic magic it may well be, but the trope is not a *permutatio ex contrario ducta* or εἰρωνεία. According to Corominas and other etymologists the reason why the striped tunny has been known as *bonito* (which means pretty in Spanish) for centuries is quite simply because people found "its golden eyes and silvery belly" rather attractive. So the important matter of How the *Bonito* got its Name would be a case of synecdoche or of antonomasia.

TAMARÓN.
General Arrando 13, 28010 Madrid.

Shakespeare's 'Lost Years'

Sir, – Reference S. Schoenbaum's review (April 19) of E. A. J. Honigmann's *Shakespeare: The "lost years"*, Aubrey is often censured for having set down (in what were merely rough jottings) that Shakespeare's father was a butcher. It would be by no means impossible that John Shakespeare, apparently a glover by trade, also had interests as a grazier (therefore butcher), but as noted in the Arden *Hamlet* (ed Harold Jenkins, 1982, p 294), Aubrey's words, "when he kill'd a calfe he would doe it in high style, and make a speech", seem to rest on having been told that of Shakespeare, without understanding that killing a calf was a traditional mumming performance. Shakespeare himself alludes to this; when Hamlet teases Polonius for boasting about his own amateur acting Hamlet says (III, 2, 104–5): "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf [fool] there." I draw attention to this as too many people (not, I hasten to add, Dr Schoenbaum) only know Anthony Wood's grossly unfair and ungrateful abuse of Aubrey, who always has his reasons.

ANTHONY POWELL.
The Chantry, nr Frome, Somerset.

Sir, – May I beg space in your columns for a correction or two to my notice of E. A. J. Honigmann's *Shakespeare: The "lost years"* (April 19)? The Mather who taught school in Lancashire at the age of fifteen was not Cotton (1663–1728) but Cotton's grandfather Richard (1596–1669), later – like his grandson – a celebrated Congregational clergyman. The error is mine, not Professor Honigmann's. Incidentally, Cotton Mather was also teaching at fifteen; not in England but in New England.

A typist's error which I failed to spot produced Willelmo, rather than (correctly) Willielmo, as the son of "Johannes Shackespere et Maria uxor eius" in the 1588 Bill of Complaint.

S. SCHOENBAUM.
613 Constitution Avenue NE, Washington, DC.

'Mother Goose'

Sir, – I'm sorry. My reference to an American Mother Goose (March 22) was intended as a joke – to indicate the sort of credibility that can be attached to the story of the phantom volume of *Mother Goose's Melodies* supposedly published by Thomas Fleet in Boston in 1719. While most people on this side of the Atlantic who are interested in such matters are aware that Perrault was following a tradition already old in making his teller of tales a *mère d'oie*, a lingering belief in Thomas Fleet's mother-in-law as the original purveyor of nursery lore is still to be found in some American reference books and collections of nursery rhymes. Codman Hislop's article in *Colophon* (Autumn, 1935) seems to have stirred up the fires of belief originally kindled by John Fleet Eliot in 1860.

GILLIAN AVERY.
32 Charlbury Road, Oxford.

Sir, – I write not to defend Gillian Avery, because she knows well of *Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye*, just as she is well aware of the ill-founded tradition of an American Mother Goose. Rather, I write to inform Vivienne Mylne (Letters, April 12) and your other readers of the presumed facts of the case, as known to us.

It is quite astonishing that the fame of *our* Mother Goose has not yet spread to your shores. Oscar Fay Adams, the learned author of *Chapters from Jane Austen*, etc, published a book in Boston in 1889 charmingly entitled *Dear Old Story-Tellers*. Mr Adams includes among his Pantheon the likes of Homer, Aesop, La Fontaine, Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. Adams also narrates the outlines of the career of Mary Goose (Vertigoose or Vergoose) whose daughter Elizabeth Foster Goose was married (by none other than the Reverend Dr Cotton Mather) to a Boston printer, Thomas Fleet, on June 8, 1715. Adams says that (grandmother) Mother Goose sang many old songs in an unpleasantly loud voice to her grandson, Thomas junior. Further, Thomas senior compiled a collection of those songs which he issued in 1719 under the title *Songs for the Nursery, or Mother Goose's Melodies for Children*. He says that (grandmother) Mother Goose's performances were such that the printer ridiculed her efforts by featuring a long-necked goose in his printer's device. For all of these historical details I refer your eager readers to Mr Adams's book, which undoubtedly slumbers in the British Library or at the Bodleian.

Because in the past the American Antiquarian Society has been accused of promulgating a false history of this complex matter, I must set that part of the record straight. The story was initiated in 1856 by a gentleman from Boston, a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society or of the New England Historic Genealogical Society. It was this troublemaker, not we, who reported seeing at the American Antiquarian Society a copy of *Songs of the Nursery, or Mother Goose's Melodies for Children*, printed in Pudding Lane in 1719. Our late librarian, Edmund M. Barton, reported at the October 1888 meeting of the AAS that, after an extensive search, he could locate no record of the book. Barton's findings are published *in extenso* in our *Proceedings* (new series, Vol V, pp 406–10). He included a communication from Samuel P. Langley, the secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, to Edward Everett Hale on the subject.

To close the case decisively, Mary Goose is buried with her husband, Isaac Goose, in the Granary Burying Ground, located on Tremont Street in mid-Boston. She died on October 19, 1690.

By now, sir, your readers must be convinced that our Mother Goose *was* alive and well in late seventeenth-century Boston; or, was it in early eighteenth-century? Over here, we have a little trouble keeping those centuries in proper order.

MARCUS A. McCORISON.
American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, Massachusetts 01609.

Recollections of Chawton

Sir, – I was interested to see in your issue of March 1 R. D. Pepper's letter regarding *Amelia Mansfield* and the possible influence this novel may have had upon Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. May I offer to your readers an even more important biographical discovery – namely, a hitherto unknown description of Jane Austen during the Chawton years.

In 1808 Jane Austen's brother Edward Knight leased his Hampshire estate to a Mr John Charles Middleton for a term of five years. Mr Middleton, a widower, brought to Chawton House his six children aged between five and fifteen, and his sister-in-law Miss Maria Beckford as hostess. There are a number of references in Jane's letters to the Middletons, and Miss Beckford and her younger niece Charlotte-Maria frequently called upon the Austen ladies in Chawton Cottage. In later years Charlotte-Maria married her cousin the Revd Charles Beckford and settled in Southampton, where her uncle/father-in-law Francis Love Beckford was a magistrate.

When James-Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* of his aunt was published in 1870, Mrs Jane Leslie, a friend of Mrs Beckford's, purchased a copy of the first edition and lent it to the latter upon two separate occasions. Each time Mrs Beckford returned the volume she wrote a letter of thanks that included her own memories of these Chawton years. Neither letter is fully dated, but that of "Monday 15th" could be Monday, August 15, 1870, and is therefore given first:

Monday 15th

My dear Mrs Leslie,

Thank you again & again for the pleasure you have given me in recalling Chawton days of Childhood I return this last, having found much in it that has interested me – Jane's likeness is hardly what I remember there *is* a look, & that is all – I remember her as a tall thin *spare* person, with very high cheek bones great colour – sparkling Eyes not large but joyous & intelligent The face by *no means so broad* & plump as represented; perhaps it was taken when very young, but the *Cap looks womanly* – her keen sense of humour I quite remember, it oozed out very much in Mr. Bennett's Style – Altogether I remember we liked her greatly as children from her entering into all Games &c. – Mr. Beckford takes no interest at all as he did not know her, & never wd. read her *Novels* or in short any body's novels but Castle Square where they lived in Southn. is now pulled down but I, we both, remember the *House* which belonged to Mr. Maddeion [*sic* in transcript, *recte* Maddison] the Banker. The Beckfords were not then located in Southampton but Charles remembers Lansdowne *Castle* but not the Ponies . . . I am afraid our Summer is passed away – what strange weather we have had Charles says . . . . Ever yours sincerely, C. Maria Beckford.

The reference to the end of summer suggests this letter could be August 15, 1870; alternative dates might be July 1872 or September 1873.

The second letter cannot be earlier than 1875:

Thursday 12 Aug.

Dear Mrs. Leslie,

I return your Book with *very many thanks* – It has been very, indeed most, interesting to me as my very girlish days were spent at Chawton House, which my Father rented for 7 [*sic*] Yrs. from Mr Knight Jane Austen's Brother – We saw her often She was a most kind & enjoyable person *to Children* but somewhat stiff & cold to strangers She used to sit at Table at Dinner parties without uttering much probably collecting matter for her charming novels which in those days we knew nothing about – her Sister Cassandra was very lady-like but *very prim*, but my remembrance of Jane is that of her entering into all Childrens Games & liking her extremely. – We were often asked to meet her young nephews & nieces were *at Chawton with them*. Our house Chawton House was a very ancient affair – Dogs instead of Grates & Tapestry instead of Paper. An immense Hall –, of course a haunted Gallery which no Servant wd. Pass alone, – but it was a charming place – one Wing was modernised for Comfort – There were Staircases which gave us much fun & many tumbles – as in those happy days we were 6 Children – I alas now the only one to remember it . . . . Ever yours very truly, C. Maria Beckford.

I know all the people mentioned in your book & altogether it has been a pleasant reminiscence.

This copy of the *Memoir*, with the two letters tucked inside it, was purchased c 1941 by Mr and Mrs Tritton, the then owners of Godmersham Park. The Vicar of Godmersham, the Revd S. G. Brade-Birks, saw the letters and sent typescript copies to Dr R. W. Chapman with an explanatory letter dated September 16, 1941. His letter, and the copies, are amongst those of Dr Chapman's papers which were deposited in the Bodleian Library in recent years.

D. G. LE FAYE.
16 Wilton Court, Wilton Road, Muswell Hill, London N10.

Weber and Marx

Sir, – In his review of Volume 15 of the collected speeches and articles of Max Weber (April 19), Tom Bottomore is certainly right in pointing out that Weber had "no real knowledge of Marx's theoretical work and uses as its source for a discussion of Marxist socialism only the *Communist Manifesto*". I feel, however, that the reader should be told that the most important theoretical works by Marx, such as the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, were published long after Weber's death.

FRANCO FERRAROTTI.
Department of Sociology, Graduate Faculty, New School for Social Research, 65 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10003.

The Irish dialect word in the extract from Tom Paulin's poem, "Father of History", quoted by Patricia Craig and referred to elsewhere in her review of Paulin's *Ireland and the English Crisis* (April 19), is correctly spelt "sheugh".

Basil Blackwell

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COMMENTARY

The mechanics of evil

A. S. Byatt

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
The Cenci
Bristol New Vic

The Cenci is a suffocating play, a study of evil triumphant with no mitigating hope for virtue. It is also a very lucid play: Count Cenci argues the theology of his incestuous rape, and Beatrice, his daughter, justifies her murder of him as a vindication of God, and dies in horror, finally convinced that the world is Godless, that the principle that rules it is captious and savage like her own father. Shelley's drama is a series of neo-classical confrontations, Senecan in their horrid clarity, haunted by the echoes of Shakespearean and Jacobean tragic verse. The characters are a closed circle – "scorpions ringed with fire", in Giacomo's words, compelled to "sting themselves and die". The closed circle moves round a silence, the unnameable act of incest.

Is it unactable? Artaud thought not, reconstructing the play as part of his Theatre of Cruelty, an attack on the audience's sense of order by characters who were mythical forces, "not men but beings". The Bristol New Vic sets it in a black, velvety pit of smoky darkness, out of which a black staircase rises into blackness. At the beginning of the play Beatrice unfurls from the foot of this a length of white cloth, stained scarlet in its last lap – her life. This odd, rapid gesture is isolated from the rest of the production, which offers few visual or dramatic shocks, relying on the verse and the agony of the characters themselves. We can thus see – up to a point – how far Shelley himself wrote an essentially undramatic play. An essential dramatic pivot is the scene where Count Cenci tries to compel Beatrice (off stage) to come *voluntarily* to commit the unnameable act a second time. Her steadfast refusal is conveyed to him by a servant, hailing hoarsely from the wings lines in Beatrice's style. "Go tell my father that I see the gulph / Of Hell between us two, which he may pass, / I will not." This is Shelley's fault: it cannot work, and doesn't. The rape itself doesn't work either. The director Debbie Shewell has introduced one fierce kiss, implausibly, where Shelley would not have dared and was depending on silent menace, and a dumb-show undoing of a girdle on a balcony, which is curiously inhibited. But the scene in which Cenci, echoing Lear, but with terrible overtones, curses Beatrice's possible unborn child, is ferociously and brilliantly acted by both players.

The trial scene seems hurried. The murderer Marzio dies under torture: in Shelley the torturer says he said "Nothing. As soon as we / Had bound him on the wheel he smiled on us / as one who baffles a deep adversary/and holding his breath, died." In this production, all this speech is cut except "Nothing".

Shelley intended his language to be plain, "the real language of men in general" and without poetic decoration. In Bristol the cutting has pared away what little specificity there was from the skeletal "beings not men". Cenci gloats over the deaths of his sons, who have names and manners of dying in the text, but not in the production. More seriously, the absent but brooding figure of the Pope, a crafty, feeble, grumpy old man, ready to sympathize unjustly with any parental power, is reduced to a mere name. This sparseness does give great drive to the action, which is never tedious, and always urgent. I found myself sympathizing at times with Dr Leavis, whose castigations of Shelley's vaporous rewriting of Shakespeare used to make me think there must be something to be said for Shelley. Beatrice's mad fear of death *is* a miserable parody of Claudio's in *Measure for Measure*, and Othello's fear of putting out Desdemona's light makes Giacomo's echoing fear of extinguishing his father look paltry. But Shelley wrote another kind of verse as well – light, clear, judicious, desperate – and the cast rise to it.

William Hoyland's Count Cenci lacks lubricity and lacks – not entirely – demonic glee in others' pain. But he is a powerful presence. Leonie Mellinger's Beatrice moves from a composed innocence through madness to a composed acceptance of absolute injustice. In the first act her speech is a little glib and running, hurrying over lines that Shelley, writing for Kean's stage, wrote to be lingered over or declaimed. But in the final act she manages both the paradoxical icy assertion of her innocence, the certainty that she will not die, and the reaction from that, with control and variety. Richard Albrecht, as Orsino, the clerical plotter whose machinations lead nowhere within the charmed circle, is also very good, busy, cunning, apparently sharper than the doomed Cenci, ultimately feebler. Critics have said that the role of Lucretia, Cenci's wife, is thankless and weak. Ursula Mohan triumphantly proves them wrong. She is wholly human, wholly concerned for others, wholly, when it comes to it, afraid of her execution in a tremulous way. Scenes come alive when the two contrasting women are together – Beatrice, her father's daughter, a creature of will and passion; Lucretia, gentler, more grown up, ineffective but alive.

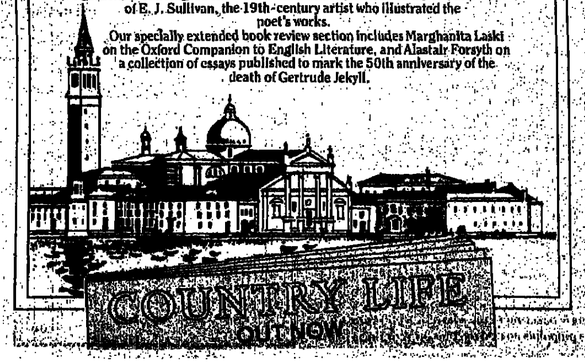
The casting of William Hoyland as the trial Judge, courteously dooming the family, emphasizes shockingly and effectively that the father is the arbitrary power. And the last moment, when the two women, out of his presence, gently knot up each other's hair for the axe, is splendid theatre, and very moving.

TRAVEL WITH MARK TWAIN IN COUNTRY LIFE

Mark Twain, born 150 years ago in Missouri, would travel abroad when financially pressed, making more than 40 journeys, many to Britain. Geoffrey Smith recounts his experiences.

And, the only British library where you can eat buttered toast in the reading-room; the gardens of Harrington Hall, which have links with Lord Tennyson; and the work of E. J. Sullivan, the 19th-century artist who illustrated the poet's works.

Our specially extended book review section includes Marghanita Laski on the Oxford Companion to English Literature, and Alastair Forsyth on a collection of essays published to mark the 50th anniversary of the death of Gertrude Jekyll.



A universal paranoia

T. O. Treadwell

ARTHUR MILLER
The Archbishop's Ceiling
Bristol Old Vic

The Archbishop's Ceiling arrives for its European première at the Bristol Old Vic with a troubled past. The play was first produced in Washington, DC, in 1977 but was then withdrawn by its author; a rewritten and substantially shortened version appeared in Cleveland in 1984, and further revisions have been made for this production.

It must be said that the scars of all this surgery are somewhat disfiguring. Arthur Miller's play has at its centre an idea that is both interesting and potentially dramatic, but so many other issues are introduced – the traces, presumably, of themes more fully explored in earlier versions – that the focus becomes uncertain, and a potentially chilling study of institutionalized paranoia diffuses into a portentous oration on the state of the world.

At the heart of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* is the question of what happens to human behaviour and relationships in a society that habitually eavesdrops on its citizens. The play is set in the salon of what has formerly been the Archbishop's palace in an anonymous eastern European capital which sounds very much like Prague; the room is dominated by a splendidly carved and painted ceiling which has possibly been bugged by the agents of the state. The palace is now the home of Marcus, a famous writer and editor in high favour with the government, who is joined by two other eminent authors, his fellow-countryman Sigmund and Adrian Wallach, an American, together with Maya, a journalist who in the past has been mistress and muse to all three.

The most significant of these figures, we understand, is Sigmund, a novelist of unique national importance, whose uncompromising integrity has made him unpopular with the régime, and who is now under pressure to emigrate. Marcus urges him to go and his motive becomes the play's central issue: is he acting as a loyal friend, or as an agent of the authorities who want Sigmund out of the way? The question is argued out under the Archbishop's ceiling, which may (or may not) be transmitting the attitudes and opinions expressed to the tape-recorders of the secret police.

The play works best when it gives a picture of a society in which friends are indistinguishable from enemies, in which the most casual remark has to be weighed and considered for its effect on its hearers, seen and unseen. Unfortunately, Miller wants to universalize this theme, to suggest that the situation in which Sigmund and his companions find themselves is a parable of the human condition, not only in the present, when the FBI and the CIA are as capable of prying into the lives of their own citizens as the secret services of the East, but also in the past, when the all-hearing ear was God's. The character chiefly used to widen out the play in this way is Adrian, the American novelist. Like Sigmund, he is supposed to be a writer of major stature (nothing in the dialogue written for either character lends much plausibility to this supposition), but he intrudes into the tense, ambiguous relationship between Sigmund and Marcus with such naivety and clumsiness that it is difficult to see why his rather commonplace views of the state of the universe should be taken seriously. The role of Maya is also puzzling; it is never clear why she is so important to the work of the three novelists, and hints about her possibly treacherous seductiveness lead nowhere in the play as it stands. There is some distracting by-play with a pistol; one day a brave and independent playwright will confront Chekhov's dictum by introducing one of these weapons into his work without requiring that it go off, but that day has not yet arrived. In *The Archbishop's Ceiling* ideas misfire but the pistol doesn't.

Paul Unwin's production is well served by his cast, particularly Alan Dobie, silkily sinister as the enigmatic Marcus; Ed Bishop as Adrian, and Maureen O'Brien as Maya struggle successfully with their ungrateful roles. The ceiling itself, a pleasing piece of pastiche baroque, is by Su Bentinck.

The periodicals, 27: *Ariel*

James Campbell

Ariel
No 58. $22 (surface mail)
PO Box 3349, Jerusalem, Israel. Subscribers should specify which language they prefer.

The Israeli review of arts and letters, *Ariel*, is now in its twentieth year. The contents of any issue selected at random display the eclectic mind of the magazine's editor, Asher Weill, and issue number 58, the most recent, is no different. The opening article is a historical account of the postage stamp in Israel (the first ones were printed in 1948) and the closing piece describes the work of the Kibbutz Dance Company, dating back to the same year. In between there are two articles about the artist Anna Ticho, a "Flight Log" made from an air journey within Israel's boundaries ("With the guns of Syria bristling on its northern and eastern flanks, Mount Hermon is beyond approach. We've come as far north as we can") and the usual quota of colour and black-and-white plates and other illustrations. In spite of the variety, however, the overall effect of *Ariel* is of a magazine playing safe, with a tendency to bland civility.

The fact that *Ariel* is published simultaneously in English, French, German and Spanish editions (thrice yearly) reinforces the feeling that at least a part of its function is to provide an uncritical forum from which the nation may advertise its own cultural achievements. The necessity of translating virtually everything in the magazine, including fiction and poetry, into several languages at once arouses a worry about literary quality. In fact, in this issue, most of the writers have been well served. The short story by Nissim Aloni, "The Oven", translated by Dalya Bilu, opens with a description of a little girl: "Her hair was thick and black and her fingers cool and slender. Her step was quick, her head high, and the air surrounded her like an invisible screen as she walked. One winter, when our street had turned into a sea, she hailed me to ferry her on my raft to the shore of her street." There are poems by T. Carmi, Paul Raboff and a sequence of brashly erotic works by Ramy Dinnany, translated into English by the author with a verve which makes one curious about the original Hebrew: "My molasses mulatto sweetheart / is licking a sticky stick of chocococo-sugar-cane sweet / helping it come with 'Green Island' rum".

Among the events offered by the Spiro Institute for the Study of Jewish History and Culture are two symposia on "Surviving a Major Catastrophe", which will be held on Sunday afternoons at the Phoenix Cinema, Finchley, London. On May 12, *Kaddish*, a film about the family of a survivor of the Holocaust, will be followed by a discussion led by Professor Ron Baker of the British Refugee Council and a specially chosen panel. On June 2, a second film, *Children of Hiroshima*, will introduce the discussion. Tickets are £5 for the two programmes. The Institute is also sponsoring two series of lectures. Charles Spencer will lecture on "Three Centuries of Jewish Art (1656–1985)" on Wednesday mornings for four weeks from May 1. He will concentrate on the Anglo-Jewish experience from the resettlement under Cromwell to the work of twentieth-century artists such as Anthony Caro, Frank Auerbach, Lucien Freud and others. Ronnie Landau's lectures on "Prejudice Across Time and Space: An introduction through Drama" will take place on Tuesday mornings for six weeks from June 4. Further details, tickets and enrolment are available from the Spiro Institute, 3 St John's Wood Road, London NW8 8RB.

COMMENTARY

Pastoral passions

Eric Sams

SHAKESPEARE
As You Like It
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

As its throwaway title tells us, this idyllic play presents no real problems. Yet directors and designers insist on festooning it with symbolic enigmas. That is their entitlement, too, of course; and however jaded the latest novelty may look, we can always rely on the 400-year-old words to keep it fresh. Adrian Noble's new production, designed by Bob Crowley, is genuinely inventive; and it wisely treats the text with fair respect. But the exceptions are singularly unhappy. Thus Alan Rickman, the otherwise admirable if mannered Jaques, is made to complain that "so from hour to whore we rot and rot". Such crass corruption calls for public penance. There is no shortage of white sheets, which economically constitute much of the scenery and costume. They start as shrouds for disused ducal furniture; then they spread out to suggest a frost-bound forest, where they also cloak the banished lords, make a fetching playsuit for Rosalind, deck a table, and serve to represent a wedding and some bedding. Heavily bloodstained, they signify a deer-hunt; vigorously agitated, the winter wind. Their loftiest metamorphosis is into a high silk pavilion standing for courtly love, and also providing the players with extra exits and entrances. Immense pains have been taken to axe Arden; no trace of a tree remains. When Corin (Colin Douglas) enters, garbed as a shepherd and speaking rural English, he seems to have strayed in from another play.

This unusual reading of the world's supreme pastoral works effectively enough for sophisticated Shakespeareans, wearily familiar with the well-worn lines and avid for variety; but it audibly baffles the old stagers, the young beginners, and the tourist trade, for all of whom Stratford should also cater. I doubt whether anyone was much helped by the insistent verbal and visual cross-references. Smoke is mentioned in the text; smoke duly rises from the stage. Time is thoughtfully indicated by a clock, theatrical illusion by a looking-glass. The word "motley" is illustrated by a display of one green and one red glove, held up as examples.

On occasion, this oddly sombre hybrid of realism and fantasy proves unexpectedly compelling. Andrew Yeats (Amiens) sings well. The much-debated Act V masque comes off rather revealingly; only in such a dream-world could Hymen ever appear to be a dénouement. The symbolism of chaos also offers a fair inference about the genesis of the play. Its plot and action, like its famous set speeches, all deal with diversity and disparity; their insistent theme is difference, whether of status, sex, or just opinion. Love alone remains constant; and even that is variegated in the garden of Arden, from the old Adam (touchingly portrayed by Mark Dignam) to the young Eve, alias Rosalind. In that primordial role, Juliet Stevenson is a star in the making. Her velocity sometimes outruns her clarity, expecially in the lighter patter of quick-fire prose; but the gleam and glow of true feeling, expressed in glance and gesture as well as inflection and cadence, are always conspicuous. The excellent Celia of Fiona Shaw has her own complementary humour and charm, never occulted by her bright companion. The Touchstone they take with them on their travels turns out to be Nicky Henson, a droll auguste with dazzling technical skills of miming and timing; the "seventh cause" speech in particular is hilariously choreographed for clown and company.

Here and elsewhere the details threaten to distract and indeed detract from the intended unity. But the production remains integral and mainly successful, in its own rather abstract terms. With Hilton McRae's likeable Orlando as a fitting foil, the love-duels and passages at arms are excitingly evoked, and the teasing hints of sexual ambiguity are the more effective for their comparative restraint.

The occasion for rhetoric

Julian Graffy

MAXIM GORKY
Philistines
The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

In 1901, at the age of thirty-three, Maxim Gorky, already a successful short story writer, turned his attention to drama. The two plays he wrote in that year, *The Lower Depths* and *Philistines*, are considered in Russia to be his best and most powerful. *The Lower Depths* was staged by the RSC in 1972, but *Philistines* has had to wait until now for a major professional production in England.

The play is set in the home of a wealthy provincial merchant, Vasily Bessemyonov, his wife, Akulina, and their adult children, Tatyana and Pyotr. Other members of the household include their adopted son, Nil, a lodger, a widowed tenant, servants and various hangers-on. The Bessemyonovs are living through black days: Pyotr has been expelled from the university, Tatyana feels her life is being wasted in school-teaching. Their frustrations are vented on their uncomprehending parents, who deal with the conflict of generations in different ways: Bessemyonov meets it head on, blaming education for all his children's woes; Akulina tries to deflect her family's energy into an implacable round of meals, ritually unfolding a tablecloth over the large dining-table that is this production's main prop.

Because both characters and audience are aware from the outset that crisis is at hand, the play can confidently accommodate melodrama, the coarse drawing of some of the characters and the explicitness of much of the dialogue. Life, good and evil, old age, truth, happiness, beauty and "our beloved Russia" are the staples of conversation in Bessemyonov's house.

Politics also provides the occasion for rhetoric: Socialism, the Future, the New World and the Working Man; and concern with these issues places the play in its historical context, as Gorky attempts to give tongue to the hopes radical Russia placed in the new century. The mouthpiece for this is Nil, a character made much of in Soviet productions and singled out in Soviet criticism as the first proletarian hero of the Russian drama. It is evident from this staging, however, that his is in fact a thinly written part, didactic and hollow. Tom Mannion has chosen to display Nil's working-class credentials by speaking the part with a Scottish accent, and during his more fatuous lyric outbursts ("I'll make life give me the answers I want!") the listener fails to wondering when and how he made the difficult childhood journey from Glasgow.

The pacing of some of the major performances is misjudged. Both David Burke as Bessemyonov and especially Sean Baker, in the admittedly unrewarding role of Pyotr, shout so loudly, so early and so often that at the play's climax they have no new resources with which to move us, and this draws attention to the fact that Gorky too has burnt himself out by act four. But the production boasts a splendid new text, witty, colloquial and energetic, by Dusty Hughes (from a literal translation by Helen Rappaport), and some good acting from Clive Rappaport), and some good acting from Clive Russell as the cynically eloquent lodger, Teterev, and Anna Calder-Marshall as the captivating widow, Yelena. At the centre of this production, however, is a complex and moving reading of Tatyana by Fiona Shaw. At the beginning of the play she paces the stage neurotically, in mourning for her life, rake-thin, contemptuous. Then when real tragedy descends upon her she expresses true grief, hugging the walls, or lying bereft in her dressing-gown, her devastated face eloquent of her loss of hope. This fine performance does most to remake the play, shifting the emphasis from the tragedy of history to a precise personal grief.

"Basket of fruit", 1928, from the Arts Council's exhibition, Drawings by Bonnard, *which is at York City Art Gallery until June 2 and at the Courtauld Institute in London from June 8 to July 21.*

A ballet of bad dreams

Lucy Ellmann

Michael Wishart
Parkin Gallery, until May 17

Michael Wishart published an autobiography, *High Diver*, in 1977 after a ten-year period of doing little painting. With its sometimes macabre reminiscences and witty, passionate tone the book has apparently acted as a home-made muse, supplying its writer with imagery for the series of recent paintings now on show. As a writer and as an artist, Wishart shows a winning honesty combined with a lax attitude towards the tying up of loose ends. People are twirled on and off stage in his book as speedily as paint can be prodded into conveying the rudiments of a form – it is as if the world is best felt out by a fast-moving hand.

Wishart's roots lie somewhere in anti-modernism: he proclaims, "I should take ear-plugs to one of Mr Cage's silent concerts." Turner, Tiepolo, Van Gogh, the Surrealists and Graham Sutherland (Wishart's godfather in life as in art), constitute his early allegiances. But his work is a private ballet of bad dreams. Bemoaning the destruction of scenery by the tourists who flock to see it, Wishart tramples more personal paths: "I have always painted through the transparent gauze of memory. I believe that what my work has lost in travelogue veracity it has gained in imaginative force." Ominous apparitions emerge unexpectedly (Wishart's life is full of them). Big white flowers placed against the famous rock formation at Etretat make the dark cliff metamorphose into a man, who allows a sail-boat to pass under his arm. Wishart's hallucinations emerge in contrast to the sinister as well as the serene: in his book he remembers seeing, during the Second World War, bedraggled pink parachutes which had failed to open on their descent and were left dotting the tops of trees, "a cruel parody of blossom".

Another visual tussle occurs within his canvases, between the use of paint to communicate content and the sense of it as substance in itself. Blues become water or sky for an instant, before a protuberant glob of paint restores the viewer's awareness of artifice. Hydrangeas crowding a cliff path melt in the distance above into a simple pink and blue ribbon.

In *High Diver*, Wishart describes a day in New York when his lover of four years' standing "calmly told me that he no longer needed what I represented in his life . . . I watched a guillotine of violent blue slide down the window space to become that flawed day's unflawed sky". Blue is Wishart's favourite colour. Here, in his observation of something distantly beautiful in the midst of a painful scene, he pinpoints an odd partnership common in his paintings. A Christian treatment of despair redeems what are otherwise strictly melancholy pictures. The jewel-like brilliance of some flowers, a bright lamp, deep red curtains and rows of green books lighten an ostensibly death-ridden picture with joyful stabs of colour, transcending a sober theme. With Wishart, pain and pleasure are unsettlingly likely to be discovered sharing a bed.

The difficulties of Wishart's own life are echoed in his book by numerous suicides and premature deaths among his friends. The paintings reflect even more openly, but sometimes crassly, Wishart's vast acquaintance with mortality. A small black galleon sailing by, too exactly painted to fit the picture's mood, brings to excess a sense of melodrama in a none the less disturbing scene of a beach littered with the weather-beaten corpses of wooden boats, whose bare ribs provide hooks on which Wishart hangs several skulls. Hovering in many pictures is a brightly coloured glove, posed in ballet fashion vaguely gesturing, and pierced with nails which enable it to hang from the wooden beams that loom large over the sea or recur as part of an interior wall. The gloves point not only to other significant parts of the pictures they inhabit, but to Wishart's horrific wartime recollection: after a bombing-raid, a friend picked up a glove on the street which contained an amputated hand.

Wishart describes great art as the "product of untellable suffering overcome, transformed by some agonizing alchemy into beauty". He has more modest claims for himself: "Call me a dedicated dauber who holds his top hat upside-down and is sometimes surprised to see a rabbit fall out of it." Wishart's brand of magic in fact lies hazily between the two.

new community
Journal of the Commission for Racial Equality

latest issue, Vol XII, No 1

Education and Youth
with contributions from *Parminder Bhachu, Michael Conolly, George Gaskell/Patten Smith, Bill Taylor*

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A world awry

Robert Alter

A. B. YEHOSHUA
A Late Divorce
Translated by Hillel Halkin
352pp. Harvill Press. £8.95.
0002714485
YEHUDA AMICHAI
The World is a Room
Translated by Elinor Grumet and others
197pp. Jewish Publication Society of America. $13.95.
0827602340
AHARON APPELFELD
The Retreat
Translated by Dalya Bilu
125pp. Quartet. Paperback, £3.95.
0704334879

To judge by the number of titles that have been appearing in translation, Israeli Hebrew fiction over the past few years has begun to attract a remarkable degree of interest in both Britain and America. The novels of Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua and, now, Aharon Appelfeld are regularly brought out in English within a couple of years of their original Hebrew publication, are often accorded long reviews in the prominent English-language literary journals, and occasionally are even celebrated as masterpieces. Despite such unrestrained critical enthusiasm, some of this fascination with Israeli fiction probably has little to do with literary values. The Western press at large, that is, has exhibited what must be called an inordinate preoccupation with events in Israel – whether out of sheer curiousity over so vexed a trouble-spot or perhaps by virtue of the intensities of feeling, pro and contra, of so many Jewish journalists and readers.

I say this simply to put things in proper perspective. Aharon Appelfeld may be a writer of considerable interest, but he is not the new Kafka or the new Isaac Babel, as some of his Anglo-American admirers tend to suggest – and, indeed, his latest book to appear in English, *The Retreat*, exposes the more anaemic features of his imagination. Nevertheless, some exciting things have been going on in Hebrew fiction over the past two decades, and there are reasons unrelated to politics why much of this writing may address itself to the inner world of serious readers elsewhere.

Israeli fiction today is dominated by writers who first achieved prominence in the 1960s – the so-called New Wave, as the critic Gershon Shaked has designated it. This is essentially the second generation of native Israeli writers, and for a time it seemed that the difference between it and its immediate predecessor, the Generation of 1948, was a difference between realism and the various symbolic and experimental modes cultivated by the more recent Hebrew writers. Of late, it has become evident that Oz and Yehoshua have moved away from their early involvement in symbolism and fantasy towards a blend of social and psychological realism, while their contemporaries, Yatzhak Ben-Ner, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, and the late Yaakov Shabbtai (whose remarkable *Past Continuous*, the most formally innovative Hebrew novel of the past twenty years, will soon appear in English translation) have all along been preoccupied with the nuanced representation of individual lives embedded in specific social milieux. As these new volumes by Amichai, Appelfeld and Yehoshua variously make clear, the decisive shift between the two generations is not from realism to symbolism or fantasy but from a strongly centred vision to a marginal one, and I would suggest that the appeal of much recent Hebrew fiction may derive from the power of its strenuously marginal perceptions.

"Normalization", we should remember, was once an important plank in the Zionist platform: the Jews, after centuries of deformation in the Diaspora, were to become *kekhol hagoyim*, like all the nations. The Generation of '48 struggled with this ideal and willy-nilly wrote fiction under its aegis. This was above all a fiction about life in peer groups (in the army, on the kibbutz, or elsewhere), and most of the writers themselves had grown up under the terrific peer pressure of left-wing youth movements in Israel. The leftist background also meant, alas, that the novelists tended to derive their models of fiction from Hebrew translations of Soviet Socialist realism. Although tensions between individual and collective were often explored, some notion of normalcy was presupposed: all the protagonists – indeed, almost all the characters – were young, male, native Israelis, solid products of the new Zionist upbringing, baffled by their historical predicament rather than by their own neuroses. Fiction was thus imagined out of the centre of national life and evinced little interest in anything away from the centre.

With the New Wave writers who are now drawing attention in translation, all this has changed. Although every one of the writers is firmly committed to the national enterprise that remains in a state of chronic crisis, although none is what would be thought of elsewhere as "disaffected", the assurance of the Generation of '48 that there is a solid centre has vanished. This decentring is manifested both in technique and characterization. Instead of the I'm-all-right/you're-all-right world of young Israeli males, this new fiction is populated by old people, small children, isolated women, dropouts, neurotics, psychotics, outsiders, displaced persons both in the narrow historical sense and in their relation to life. The ways of describing reality, moreover, in this body of fiction, whether they are associated with the point of view of the protagonists or are the product of an impassive narrator, typically set things at some odd and disquieting tilt, unsettle conventional assumptions, turn up the moral, psychological and visual underside of places, people and historical circumstances. In this fundamental regard, Israeli fiction may well be serving as an exemplary instance for intellectual readers everywhere: caught in the crushing grip of history, with the demands of the collective at his ear and the possibility of disaster always on the horizon, the Hebrew writer exercises a freedom of vision, reconstructing the ambiguities of the human predicament with a vocabulary radically different from the official or conventional one.

A. B. Yehoshua's *A Late Divorce*, available now in a beautiful English version by Hillel Halkin, aptly illustrates this general orientation. The novel is constructed out of nine Faulkneresque interior monologues – a technique Yehoshua also used in his previous novel, *The Lover*, but which is handled here with a more fully realized differentiation of voices. The monologues are distributed among various members of the Kaminka family, who are grouped around the family crisis of the impending divorce between the ageing paterfamilias, temporarily returned from residence in America, and his institutionalized wife. The question of return to Israel, depature to America, and severance of family ties, has obvious national implications, but the Kaminkas are presented less as paradigmatic than as an individual case-study of neurotic and psychopathological entanglements. The first monologue is that of a small boy, Yehuda Kaminka's grandson, and is touching, funny, full of childish bafflement. The subsequent monologues exhibit the variously frustrated, angry, anxious, and bewildered imaginings of a frigid daughter-in-law, her impotent husband, his homosexual brother (seen on the analyst's couch), their "normal" sister and her philistine husband, the demented mother Naomi and, finally, her errant husband Yehuda. If one chooses to view this novel as a representation of Israeli reality, it must be regarded as an elaborate exercise in decentring and fragmenting perception of that subject. Here, for example, is how Naomi Kaminka sees the Haifa Bay area with its oil refineries from her vantage-point at the insane asylum:

> The sun-softened water luminescent now warm spray of oily flame turning slowly to gray in the soft lava of darkness spewn up from the earth from the great vats hidden in the watered grass overrun with fierce weeds thorny burnet yellow-blossoming broom creeping up among the tree tops fanning out on a breath of wind turning blue day into a black canopy for this sodden world of wet earth greedily sipping clinging with lips that suck that kiss stoutly swinging the tongueless bell of evening snuffing out the small spaces between the lines between the words making the pages of my book a shapeless blob while empty and bloated a giant moon suddenly flips over in the last window quietly slips into the evening on a weak low slant.

There is an obvious mimetic justification for the disorienting syntax and imagery here in the mental derangement of the character, but this strangely tangled vision of place has a poetic power, and hence a larger validity, that do not seem strictly limited to the character, that invite us to look at this piece of the world with startled new eyes. Such disorientation of perception makes its first appearance in Israeli fiction with the short stories Yehuda Amichai wrote in the 1950s. (*The World is a Room* is drawn from his 1961 Hebrew volume, *In This Terrible Wind*, with the addition of just one recent story.) Amichai belongs by age to the Generation of '48 (he recently turned sixty), but as a poet – in my view, Israel's best – experimenting with prose, he has closer affinities with the New Wave writers than with his contemporaries. One of the great recurrent themes of this poetry is the desperate attempt to imagine, to secure or recover a world of private experience, private desire, in a national existence repeatedly rocked by war, where the individual is forever called on to serve the group. In the stories, this tension is translated into a perpetually scrambled reality in which the paraphernalia of war spill over into domesticity and love and vice versa. Here is a characteristic moment in "The Battle for the Hill", a story that alludes parodistically to the conventional *engagé* fiction of the Generation of '48:

> Instead of going on to see our friends, I sat my wife down in the sandbox next to the forgotten boy, and proceeded to the mobilization room at the army base. I passed through many rooms: the buffet, the engineering corps room, the synagogue, the quartermaster's room, the bathroom – until I found the mobilization room. There I expected to find a great bustle of people, coming and going in a hurry, but I found only two women soldiers sitting in front of the door. "Wait just a minute!" they said in unison as I approached, and then settled down again. One of them wore a blouse with a flower pattern and a khaki skirt, the other a khaki blouse and a skirt with a flower pattern – like clowns at Purim.

The ostensible anti-realism of such writing is in one respect a deeper realism. In a country where much of the population must be prepared to switch, repeatedly, from civilian garb to khaki, where any play-school room may also be a bomb shelter, this kind of disruption of the domestic and the erotic by the sudden necessities of war is a predicament no one escapes. The eccentric vision, the free-wheeling phantasmagoria of Amichai's prose are but an extrapolation of national reality, a way of writing it large. As far as I am aware his fiction has had no direct imitators, and, of course, his major work has been in poetry, not fiction. (Since these stories, he has written two novels; one of them, *Not of This Time and Place*, 1963, an extraordinary achievement, is available in an abridged English version. Since 1971, he has concentrated almost exclusively on poetry.) But Amichai's sense that the world has to be seen awry in order to be seen rightly has by now become pervasive in much Israeli fiction.

This may help explain why growing recognition has been given within Israel in recent years to the work of Aharon Appelfeld. Appelfeld is in several ways an outsider to Hebrew literature and to Israel; and his fiction is written from the perspective of an outsider, which is in a sense the source of its special authority. He was born in Czernowitz, Bukovina (like Paul Celan and like the important Israeli poet, Dan Pagis). Sent to a concentration camp as a young boy, he managed to escape and survive in the forests; after the war, he came to Israel just before the declaration of national independence. Most of his stories and short novels are set in Central Europe during the late 1930s or the 1940s, although he writes not directly about the Holocaust but rather about the displacements it produced or, in the pre-war pieces, that presaged it. Even his relation to Hebrew, the language he acquired in late adolescence, is that of the outsider anxious to preserve his stance on the outside: in the Hebrew original there is a studious avoidance of allusive echoes, of indigenous idiomatic coloration, and the cultivation of a strangely neutral, deadpan diction that in itself is always a little unsettling. Indeed, if there is any point of contact with Kafka, it would be here, in the willed neutrality of the language.

Appelfeld's fiction often verges on parable without having its explicitness, but *The Retreat* seems to me a little too close for comfort to parabolic insistence. A has-been Austrian Jewish provincial actress, on the eve of the Holocaust (which, like the Nazis and even political antisemitism, is never referred to) retires to an isolated mountain hotel for Jews who are dedicated, intermittently and ineffectively, to eradicating all traces of their "deformed" identity as Jews, from accent to physique and habits of recreation. This story of the sadness and futility of self-rejection under the growing shadow of annihilation does not develop in any compelling way, but simply states and restates the same point with variations. Even here, however, there are moments when the odd disorientation of the Appelfeld vision produces telling effects. He never describes anything in detail, never stresses the possibilities of pathos in his material, never intervenes as explicit interpreter, but the assemblage of a few strategic details of scene, dress and physical presence can convey a sense of radical disturbance intrinsically linked to the historical matter of his fiction. In this one regard, for all the obvious differences, Appelfeld has an affinity with native Israeli contemporaries like Yehoshua, Kahana-Carmon and Shabbtai. Here is the protagonist of *The Retreat*, just before the end of the novel, recollecting the moment with which the novel began:

> Lotte now remembered her arrival on the mountain clearly; the coach and the coachman, Julia sitting in the corner, tight-lipped, her brow dark and her hands red and swollen with water. It all looked cold and remote to her now, although the proportions seemed right and the colours not exaggerated. And she remembered Lang too, in his short gym pants, standing at the front entrance, thin and joyless, a corporal in an anonymous army of reserves. She saw Herbert too. His checked suit, elegantly negligent, inspiring confidence.

It is an odd cluster of perceptions – water-swollen hands, one man in shorts, another in a checked suit – but it has a kind of inscrutable coherence. Reality is always stranger than we are willing to admit, and much of the energy of recent Hebrew fiction has been directed towards recovering that strangeness.

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HEBREW AND YIDDISH LEGACIES-A SYMPOSIUM

We asked a number of writers to assess the role played by Hebrew and Yiddish culture in their work.

John Hollander

Growing up in New York in an observant home with the Jewish liturgical year rather like the weather for me, I fell in love with the English language and its literature; from my early childhood the half-comprehended cadences of the Hebrew Bible and the faintly misunderstood prose of the King James Version moved in my internal ear, sometimes contending for authority, often in a kind of *pas de deux*. My poetic apprenticeship was modernist, wry and masked. My first book had no physical "Judaic content", save for a bit of the Midrash in Ecclesiastes read as an admonition against the foolishness of poetic ambition in the epigraph. But as my poetry became more American its revisions and questionings, its Judaic concerns – textual, historical, interpretative – also unfolded. I saw poetry in general as a kind of Midrash or interpretative parable on the text of the world as I began to feel similarities between the ways which true poetry and Jewish identity seem doomed to be misconstrued.

In the matter of Yiddish, I should add that I grew up with only a few words of it in learned hearsay, neither of my parents being native speakers. From German and Hebrew, I came to be able to read it a little, and its structure and the role of Hebrew, Slavic and even Romance in its vocabulary were of great linguistic and poetic interest. About eighteen years ago Irving Howe asked me to try some translations of modern Yiddish poetry for an anthology he was compiling, and I developed an intimate relationship with Moishe Leib Halpern and Mani Leib, in particular, two poets I've since done more work with for the forthcoming Penguin anthology. The ranges of diction and tone and the kinds of lyrical irony they exhibited got into my ear somehow and shook up my own rhetoric, but I should leave it to a good critic to say exactly how.

Dan Jacobson

There is a wonderful phrase in the uncompleted account of his childhood which Dickens wrote for his friend John Forster. In it he describes himself sitting on his bed at nightfall, hearing the cries of his playmates from outside, and "reading as if for life". Those few words speak not only of the intensity of the child's immersion in the fantasy-world which he and the book in his hand had created between them; they also express the grown man's awareness that the experience he was describing had indeed determined the course that his "real" life, his adult life, was eventually to take. Dickens was a man of overpowering genius, one of the greatest writers the world has known; but we can be pretty sure that anybody who becomes a writer of fiction or poetry, at whatever level of creativity or intellectual force, has at some time in his childhood read "as if for life". To read in that fashion is to discover that the process of ordering and elaborating fantasies into completed stories, phrase by phrase and sentence by sentence, rather than constraining the imagination, releases it; does not confine the self to what it already knows but provides a mode of escape from it.

These are the levels at which "influence" operates most deeply and in the most enduring fashion: hardly as a model or set of models, but more as an initiation into an activity. In my own case, the stories and poems which lured me into becoming a reader, and thus eventually into becoming a writer, were all English. As a child I could read no other language and was never read to or had stories told to me, either by my parents or by my older brothers, in any other. This in spite of the fact that the household in which I grew up, in Kimberley, South Africa, was in some ways a polyglot one. The language of my parents' childhood had been Yiddish (though by the time I became conscious of what was around me it had effectively been reduced to being not much more than their secret language, the one in which they spoke to each other when they did not want the children to understand); we spoke to the servants in Afrikaans; and they in turn spoke to one another in *their* secret languages, Sotho or Tswana. In addition, my father tried spasmodically and unsuccessfully to make us acquire some knowledge of Hebrew. But the apparent privacy and penury of these languages, the sense of furtiveness associated with them, in the context of the family and the world outside, could only make more unassailable the supremacy of English – the language of school and the movies, of songs and newspapers, and of perhaps 95 per cent or more of the books in the Kimberley Public Library.

"Being Jewish", however, was another matter. If the religious-cultural meanings of the condition, as these had been known to my parents during their East European childhood, had been scorched to the ground by the South African sun, its social-political meanings (as they might be called) had acquired a new significance. It could hardly be otherwise, given the competing nationalisms and ethnicities with which the country was riven; given also the fact that my childhood and adolescence coincided with the rise of Nazism in Europe and the horrors of the Second World War. How could something which appeared to have so little substance in the one sphere (language and belief and style of life) have so much in the other (social identity, political attitudes and expectations, historical perspectives)? This was a mystery. It surprises me to realize how much of my work has been involved with that mystery, or has emerged out of that gap: sometimes in forms so well hidden I was quite unaware of what I was doing; sometimes quite plainly, as in the expression given to my belated, secular interest in the Bible and the Hebrew language.

Howard Jacobson

Although I was taught Hebrew every Tuesday and Thursday evening throughout the entirety of my childhood and youth, I never came close to mastering a word of it. The teaching was partly to blame because it was propagandist and emotional: I didn't find that it helped to have the Rabbi cry when I made a mistake. But I wouldn't have got on with the language however it was taught. I hated the primitive, Asiatic look of the script: I was unable, on aesthetic and neurological grounds, to recognize or reproduce the characters; and I resented in my soul being required to sway and incant. Read aloud, Hebrew sounded to me like a perpetual wail for the dead.

As for what the words we were learning actually meant – that never really entered into it. Translation was the least of our worries. As I remember, most sentences boiled down to, "Blessed art thou O Lord" because of something or other that thou hast given us, or, "Blessed art thou O Lord" because of something thou hast taken away. I sang for twenty minutes at my bar mitzvah, to the delight of everyone who knew me; and I made such a thorough job of memorizing my portion that I can reproduce whole chunks of it still, almost thirty years later. But I didn't have a clue what I was singing about. If I'd been told, it didn't stick. I entertained myself in Babel on the day I became a man.

Yiddish, however, was another matter entirely. Yiddish was spoken not read, it was European, vital, ribald, contemptuous, the vehicle for extraordinary family secrets and extravagant family fulminations. Remote relatives suddenly went completely off the rails in Yiddish. It was in Yiddish that daughters were warned never to darken a doorstep again. Such highly charged usage was in itself, I suppose, the very sign that by the time it was handed down to my generation it was a spent force as a complete system of communication. Where my grandparents had been capable of holding entire conversations in it, and my parents could mix it in, fifty-fifty, with English, for me and my friends its use was mainly adjectival and colorific. We sent it on specific and often highly lurid errands. It was uniquely suited, for example, to the pursuit – or at least to the *discussion* of the pursuit – of Gentile girls, for the description and categorization of whom, incidentally, it boasted an astonishingly rich and resourceful vocabulary. It possessed, in other words, all the advantages of a private language. We could talk amongst ourselves, anywhere, and not be understood. It was haughty, scurrilous, comic and conspiratorial. And therefore no use to me whatsoever when I went to prostrate myself before the classic texts of English Literature at Cambridge. I aped Dr Johnson and Jane Austen in everything I wrote, aspiring to a weighty decorum of expression. But I cursed them at night, when no one was listening, in Yiddish.

The sense of being a stranger both to one's own and, at the last, to one's adopted culture, is a familiar theme in Anglo-Jewish writing. But it has been treated too often in a tragic, morbid, or merely sentimental manner. Half the novels about being Jewish in England that I have read could have been written by the Rabbi who cried over my failure with Hebrew. I don't myself see anything to cry over in the state of being estranged. Having one home to know the privileges of exile from is a necessity for a writer; having two, as the Americans know, is a luxury. And a double invigoration. I can't recall any more exhilarating times in the company of my Jewish school-friends than when we tormented our Hebrew teachers and mocked every piety that had been passed on to us; unless it was when we turned our attention to the Christian boys and reviled them, behind their backs or to their faces, in what was left to us of Yiddish.

Gabriel Josipovici

We spoke no Hebrew at home, and, since mine was a Mediterranean Jewish family and not a Central European one, naturally no Yiddish either. There would therefore seem to be nothing further to say in answer to your question. However, life is not so simple. Through the vagaries of history I found myself, at fifteen, in this country, an English speaker but without either a native language or a native country, uneducated in Latin and acutely aware – an awareness that has not decreased with the years – of my exclusion from both the English culture and the demotic resources of the English language. Perhaps that is why, when I began to write fiction, I found myself drawn to writers who were themselves on the margins of the great stream of the European novel: Malory, Rabelais, Sterne, Proust, Queneau, Duras, Spark. When I ask myself what all these have in common I think it is this: description in their work is at a minimum and the weight of the narration is carried by dialogue. In Malory and Duras in particular a powerful sense of inevitability is combined with a sense of character erupting in speech. And there is of course another book in which we find a similar attitude to character and narrative: the Bible. Re-reading Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* recently I was struck by how old-fashioned Mann's monstrous masterpiece felt, while Genesis is as fresh today as when it was written. If Mann's is a triumph of the novelist's art then what I am after is something else, something which perhaps doesn't have a name, but of which we possess a few precious examples. The choice of one style rather than another is never arbitrary; it corresponds to profound needs. The syntax, like the attitude to speech and character, of the Hebrew Bible, which is still there in the New Testament and is pretty faithfully reproduced in the Authorized Version, is a perpetual possibility for fiction, but it is one which has rarely been taken up. All translation must fall short of the original. For that reason, ten years ago I began to learn biblical Hebrew. Now I can just about read the Old Testament narratives and struggle, with a crib, with the poetic books and with contemporary Hebrew poets like Amir Gilboa and Yehuda Amichai. These speak to me as do few English writers, past or present. Reading them gives me the courage to go my own way, the only way I can. Reading them in Hebrew gives me an added pleasure, the sense of confrontation with something wholly other yet mysteriously personal.

Alfred Kazin

Linguistically I am a poor Jew. I understand Yiddish most readily when it is spoken as badly as I speak it. After my confirmation at thirteen I did not feel impelled to continue my Hebrew studies. No doubt because I was very early drawn to the mysterious act of writing down my daily thoughts and experiences, and because English was the language that surrounded me everywhere except at home, I easily resigned myself to my gracelessness in Yiddish and Hebrew.

But I grew up in a fiercely Jewish atmosphere made even fiercer by my parents' old-fashioned working-class loyalties. Perhaps not Jewish tradition but certainly the history of the Jews – I sometimes think the history of *all* Jews through the ages – has been my secret treasure as a writer.

I cannot easily say just where and how this has influenced me. I am as much a product of English and especially American literature as I am of Jewish history. American Jewish writers do not resemble each other as much as foreigners think. I am quite sure that attempts to trace a writer's individual style to his "Jewishness" are usually ignorant and pretentious. Years ago the French literary scholar Denis Saurat informed me that Proust's "serpentine style" could be traced to his Jewish mother. I should have liked to ask him if Kafka's painfully transparent German was also due to his "Jewishness".

Cynthia Ozick

I was born in New York, the first generation of my family to fall directly into English. A thousand years of Yiddish speech lie behind me, also a thousand years of Russian penury, disability, pariahship, pogrom. In spite of which, I was raised to think of myself as an inheritor of an aristocratic intellectual tradition. I knew from earliest childhood that Jewish history was not simply a history of oppression – oppression being the cultural possession of the oppressors – but a history of moral and spiritual allegiance. I learnt this through the daily illuminations of Yiddish and sacral Hebrew: Yiddish as the language of metaphysical nearness (Milton's magisterial angels could not have spoken Yiddish!), Hebrew as the voice of the People of Israel.

Until I was eleven years old, when my grandmother died, I spoke Yiddish every day, and every day, morning and evening, heard the steady melodies of liturgical Hebrew. My grandmother, though ardently observant of every devotional punctilio, was more than conventionally or superficially "pious". She was saturated in the consciousness of the world as God's holy creation, and in the hallowed and historical sense of the People of Israel as the carriers of conscience, and as obligated defiers of brutality. All this was expressed with a kind of plain purity, a passion for truth without fuss. In part this was because of her own temperament – "mercy" and "merciful" were words she lived by – but also because the soul of Yiddish speech brings divine majesty down to the proportions of human consolation. In the sweetness of Yiddish, the Lord of Israel is a loving intimate, a household presence, a sufferer along with His people. *Gottenyu*, a way of addressing God when in despair, is a diminutive of familial endearment, of rebuke as well as dependency. In Yiddish, the Jew laments and God listens tenderly.

Almost before I could speak anything else, my grandmother taught me to say the *Sh'ma* – the Unitary Credo, declaring uncompromising monotheism, traditionally learnt by little children as the first Hebrew prayer. But "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is One" is more than prayer: it is a cry of dedication to mercy and to the repudiation of tyranny. It is the great cry of Right over self-righteousness, of clarity over muddle, of the higher imagination over idolatry. My grandmother taught me all this – in Yiddish – with a sort of quiet burning, as if my life would finally depend on this understanding.

And it has. It is true that in other families, Yiddish became the means to secularism, socialism, radical messianism, self-repudiating utopianism, a breaking-away: but not in mine. My life as a writer has depended on this understanding of the higher imagination – the imagination that will not mistake one thing for another, and will not, for instance, make a god out of the state, or out of a political theory. This passion for distinctions has taught me to be serious; and therefore how to be comical. It has taught me how to distinguish between the holy and the profane (ie, between meaning and the subversion of meaning), and therefore how to be ironic. As a writer I cannot be an aestheti-

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cian or a nihilist or a cynic or a smasher or a naturalist or an amoralist. I use, I need – for seriousness, for comedy, for irony – the sacral smoke of the moral/ontological. Though I am a belated heir and lover of the cadences and the literature of English, it came to me, this awareness, through certain syllables of holy Hebrew, and through the unassuming dedications of homely Yiddish.

Frederic Raphael

Modern cant speaks much of communities, as if everyone from miners to undertakers, poets to homosexuals, lived in congenial clusters. Such happy homogeneity has never been my experience. This is, therefore, by way of being a nil return. What is Hebrew or Yiddish to me? My father, like several generations before him, was born in England. He claimed, quietly, that our family had been among the first to return to these shores when Cromwell rescinded the embargo. As it turned out, I was born in the United States and attended my first school in New York City. It was called Ethical Culture. If its pupils were drawn largely from the middle-class Jews of Central Park West, its secular affections were manifest in its title. In the 1930s, it seemed right and proper for Jews to seek to belong to the mainstream of American life, however reluctantly they might be welcomed. It was assumed, not least by Jews, that all the efforts had to be made by the uncouth outsiders: they were to commend themselves by the uprightness of their behaviour and the grandeur of their aspirations. Judaism was a religion, to which Jews were constitutionally entitled, but it should not be an arcane cult; hence the tendency to conduct more and more of the services in English. Assimilation was not cowardice but courtesy; democratic deference to the majority involved the abandonment of "unnecessary" linguistic particularism. This pressure weighed not only on Jews: it may help to explain why Americans are often poor at languages, although their origins are so rich in tongues. Monoglots are supposedly incapable of divided loyalty or, literally, second thoughts.

When we returned to England in 1938, my parents joined the Liberal Jewish synagogue, but neither did we live in a Jewish borough nor were their friends mostly Jews. Quentin Bell, in his biography of Virginia Woolf, suggests that her husband's family spoke of Gentiles as *goyim*, but if they were at all like my father's, I am sure that they never did so. Jewishness was no more to be asserted, by the use of such vulgar jargon, than it was to be denied, through baptism or Anglicized names, though both, of course, were known. We went as often to synagogue as our suburban neighbours did to church – very rarely. I remember one particular Day of Atonement with undimmed emotion. I think it must have been in 1943. The Great Temple, in the City, had been bombed in the blitz, but its shell contained a large congregation, gathered together in pride and anguish. The service was orthodox and I understood only the *Sh'ma*, the call to Israel to remember that the Lord Our God, the Lord is One. At about that time, British and American officials were concluding, at the Bermuda Conference, that nothing could, or should, be done to assist the victims of the Final Solution or even to impede its machinery. I remember walking away from the Temple and regretting, for the first time in my life, the dispersal of all these Jews, funny-looking as some of them were, people with whom I had everything and nothing in common.

I went back to school and resumed the study of Latin and Greek. I never questioned the point of my classical education. How and why should I? Who could crave the additional burden of back-to-front Hebrew or the pedlars' jargon of Yiddish? (The term "Yid" was, from time to time, applied to me by those whose polish my housemaster hoped would rub off on me, but that scarcely encouraged investigation of the language or its literature.) Even Zionism appeared an aberrant doctrine, leading to un-British stridency. The revival of Hebrew as the official language of Israel interested me only very marginally, though the resurrection was certainly a pretty symbol. I enrolled in a course, imagining that anyone who could handle alpha and omega could also lick its cipher, but I was soon disabused.

I never wanted to be a *Jewish* writer, although I should never have become a writer at all, if it makes any sense to speak in this way, had I not been made aware, through no great wish of my own, of the singularity of the Jew. Only recently, and without any strong sense of "homecoming", have I become conscious of the richness of Yiddish literature. If Sholem Aleichem is still as foreign to me as, oh, Barbara Pym, it would be perverse to deny the inventive vigour of Isaac Bashevis Singer, who has wholly transcended the *faux-naïf* style of folkloric *Yiddishkeit*. The late Jacob Sonntag was, I suppose, the most tireless advocate of the compatibility of English, European and Jewish culture. Thanks to his *Jewish Quarterly*, we were instructed regularly in the qualities of writers and artists of whom I, at least, would otherwise have been ignorant.

Nevertheless, I remain distanced from "the community", as I do from Israel. Perhaps there are a few involuntary allusions and affinities to cultures of which I have no real knowledge, but only the degenerate form of the proverb or the joke (oh yes, the joke) tags me for what, as they say, I am. If I do not feel entirely at home in the great tradition of English literature, it is perhaps because I lack the scrupulous sophistication to relish the metaphorical nature of its antisemitism. I have tried to enjoy the irony of that minuscule "j" in Eliot's squib about the chap who is underneath the lot, but I can't get much of a buzz from it.

However occluded my sense of racial solidarity, I have very occasionally been struck by a sort of non-verbal feeling of communication, as if I had a repressed language in common with someone to whom I can say, or have said, nothing. This may well owe more to sentiment than to deep traces, but it happened recently when I looked into the dark eyes of a Spanish monk, in the great monastery of Guadalupe. He was explaining the iconography of an enamelled monument to the Virgin and, for a brief second, I seemed to see the latent Jew in him and he, at that same moment, seemed to acknowledge our fraternity, though the humour of his expression may well have been due to something entirely different. I dreamt that night of the days of the triune culture dismantled by Ferdinand and Isabella, the good Christians. How many tongues have the righteous ripped out and how much less eloquent we are for their adjustments! (It is perhaps worth wondering why Ladino, the Sephardic *patois*, has no place in this survey.)

Philip Roth

I don't read, speak or write either Hebrew or Yiddish. I learnt Hebrew as a boy, during my after-school hours, at a neighbourhood synagogue in Newark, but it was a rudimentary education that didn't carry me any further than my bar mitzvah at age thirteen. My grandparents spoke Yiddish to my American-born parents, but nobody seriously spoke Yiddish to me or expected me to understand it. With the exception of the elderly who'd been raised in Eastern Europe or Russia, our lower-middle-class Jewish neighbourhood was entirely English-speaking, and though most of my teachers in the local grade school and high school were Jews the curriculum, determined by the state of New Jersey, heavily emphasized American history, "social studies" and English literature.

What reached down to me wasn't the Yiddish language but the values and the cultural style that had been associated with the Yiddish world of the Jewish immigrants who'd come to America around the turn of the century. Skilful and energetic as the Jewish adaptation to America was in the first and second generations, the impact of the lost Yiddish world upon American Jewish sensibilities remained considerable right down to my own generation, so that even if one couldn't read, speak or write Yiddish, what was said or written in English might well be affected by a feel, however attenuated, for Yiddish expressiveness and wit, and for a turn of mind previously unfamiliar to Protestant America. It isn't Yiddish that influenced the way I write, but rather this turn of mind that influenced how I came to see the Americans I eventually began to write about, both the Jews and the non-Jews.

Clive Sinclair

My mother's father came from Stushev in South-West Poland. How the family got there no one knows. His name in Hebrew was Joshua, though he was known as Shia, its Yiddish diminutive. When he settled in England it was Anglicized and he became Charles. I am named after him, the initial letter sufficing. My grandmother still has his Russian passport (Russia then, as now, being the area's overlord) in which he is described as illiterate, meaning that he spoke only Yiddish.

My father's mother was named Shaindel. In England Shaue became plain Jane. My middle name, John, comes from her. Smolinsky was her married name, which my father changed to Sinclair when he joined the army in 1939. Thus my disguise, my *nom de vivre*, Clive Sinclair.

Joshua Smolinsky (whom I might have been) lives, but only in my stories, as a down-at-heel private eye on the seamy side of Los Angeles. Joshua ben David, by which I am known to God, has not been heard since I was called to the *bima* at my bar mitzvah more than two decades ago. The last named ought to be the essential me, but isn't. I am stuck as Clive Sinclair, because my mother tongue is English.

I recalled my grandfather's passport not so long ago when I found that among the Dover Phrase Books beloved by "seasoned travellers" was one entitled *Say It In Yiddish*. Just as *Say It In Turkish* implies a country, Turkey, in which Turkish is spoken, so *Say It In Yiddish* also predicates a Yiddish-speaking state. It contains phrases that enable the visitor to pass through customs and passport control, order a taxi to the hotel of their choice, and generally to converse with the population. But where was this country? I couldn't find it in the atlas, so I invented one, situating it in the same provinces of Poland that my grandfather once inhabited (I subsequently learned that a delegation had petitioned the dignitaries at Versailles for just such an entity, but that is real history, not my provenance).

I named the country Ashkenazia, and, though the narrator claims he speaks Yiddish, I naturally wrote the story in English. In effect, my illiteracy is exactly opposite to that of my grandfather. I am fluent in the language of Pharaoh, as it were, but more or less dumb in that spoken by my ancestors, whether in Egypt or Poland. As another of my characters put it: "There's a version of the Bible in which Moses attempts to extricate himself from God's command by stammering that his tongue is not circumcised. Well, that's exactly how I felt in Israel: I am Jewish, but my tongue is not circumcised."

I was born at a time when English history had run its course, and now when my contemporaries speak of the Empire and its end I remain unmoved. No, the matter which really interests me is precisely that for which I have no language. My friend Yosl Bergner, the Israeli artist, himself the son of Melekh Ravitsh, one of the major Yiddish poets of his generation, frequently chides me for including a few Yiddish words in my otherwise pristine English. "What is wrong with the language you speak?" he says.

Do not mistake my point, I love it. But I am a *parvenu*, just as I am an exile from my past, of which the occasional Yiddish word is a last reminder. My writing is a search for a place in which I may feel at home, where my literacy will not be in question. Since I am interested in neither sentimental atavism nor utopian visions I have not as yet found it, but if I did what else would I have to write about?

Arnold Wesker

My familiarity with Hebrew and Yiddish literature is lean. I regret this, but it means I can't draw any useful parallels between it and my own writing. The question which *does* interest me is one made at a convention last year by George Steiner: "Is it at all natural for a Jew to be a writer . . . ? We have an enormous tradition against it. . . . I believe it is natural for a Jew to be a scholar . . . ." He named Kafka, Proust, Hofmannsthal, Pasternak as writers who, "always felt deeply ill at ease with their fellow authors . . . a very secondary and made solution . . . Only secondary on the Torah was to be taken seriously – thoughts which will "become part of the living eternity of Judaism" which is Midrash, the continued argument, the re-thinking of what was given us in the Torah. . . . if you could add to that one opinion, one question, one insight, you are inside Judaism, living Judaism for ever. . . ."

Steiner's brief reflection neglects the power of poetic insight. Because he is perfectly aware of poetry's place in art we must assume that what he said was as much a provocation as an offering. It is further debatable because (to reduce the material of a thesis to a sentence) though literature written by Jews was not written as a commentary on the Torah, nevertheless its insights are to do with those same primary passions and timeless stories of faith, doubt, betrayal, survival, infidelity, prophecy, fathers and sons, the power of women, the destruction of proud kings . . . as told by the ancient story-tellers. Jewish orthodoxy would counter by claiming that the Bible's story-tellers were divinely inspired. Jewish secularists might reply: "For us, so are Proust, Kafka, Bellow, Malamud, Agnon. . . ."

Nevertheless, Steiner's is a familiar and disturbing reflection: such guilty thoughts have assailed me. Put simply: are my plays and stories the work of a writer who would rather have been a scholar? Was this Jewish reverence for the power of intellect handed down to me in ways I failed to recognize? My diaries are pitted with complaints about what I have missed and will never be able to catch up with. The company of minds shaped by academic disciplines, informed by scholarship, exhilarates me in a way that rarely occurs in the company of fellow writers. And to go from the intellectual experience to the theatrical one is often like moving from adult world to kindergarten.

Like most writers, I believe my work to be misunderstood. I despair when I read the careless assumptions of theatre commentators who seem unable to distinguish between plays about ideas and plays about flesh and blood characters who are animated by ideas. It could be no other way, since I write mainly from experience. It is a Jewish one, a milieu in which ideas were so important that their carriers were driven to actions which defined and changed their lives. Quarrels were heartbreaking; families and friendships broke up; public, political activity was intense; the simple, private round life was pursued; children emigrated to a distant land where pure principles of commonism could be lived out on a kibbutz. To be a "mentsh" was to have the integrity to make commitments, the personal courage to question authority, the intellectual power to "continue the argument, to re-think, try to add that one opinion, one question, one insight . . ."

Are Jewish artists alone in constantly attempting to reconcile the crazy kaleidoscope of lived and potent hand-me-down experience which swim around inside their consciousness? These few references do little justice to Steiner's full and stimulating statement or the qualifying remarks of the other participants. A Gentile friend suggested that our anxieties as artists were no different from those of any other artist who has always felt his or her work to be peripheral to world affairs. It is a complex and engrossing subject.

Though I was born in Britain, know no other language and feel the rhythms of my dialogue and prose to be unmistakably English, yet I feel myself an alien writer in this country. This confuses, sometimes distresses me. I persist in writing about it, attempting to understand. My conclusions are uncomfortable.

Central to the Jewish nature is a quality which, understandably, has irritated our neighbours and hosts throughout history: anti-authoritarianism. The Jews invented God. How could any other ruling or guiding force be taken seriously? More, as their own invention, they could rage at him, argue with him, tell him what he really should have done, interpret him as their fancy took them. He was theirs. They possessed him, not he them. Of course, the Jewish proclivity for God-making and breaking has infected much of Western culture, though not enough for my peace of mind. The free spirit cannot be claimed an exclusive Jewish trait but I do suggest it is the one identifying mark. Neither Hebrew nor Yiddish language nor literature informs my work but, rather, the Jewish language of thought.

Evidences of the Essenes

Geza Vermes

YIGAEL YADIN (Editor)
The Temple Scroll
Volume 1, Introduction. 419pp.
Volume 2, Text and Commentary. 486pp.
Volume 3, Plates and Text; with Supplementary Plates. 122 plates.
Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society / Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem / The Shrine of the Book. $240 the set.
YIGAEL YADIN
The Temple Scroll: The hidden law of the Dead Sea sect
261pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0 297 78411 0

After a perfunctory frisking by a security man, I was allowed to enter the home of the archaeologist Yigael Yadin, then Deputy Prime Minister of Israel. It was 1979 and he was convalescing after a serious heart attack. Pale but lively, he spoke with a childlike enthusiasm of his recent first visit to the famous ancient historical sites of Egypt, the fulfilment of a lifelong dream, expedited by President Sadat's loan of his private aircraft. When I asked about his future plans, Yadin said that his doctors were permitting him to work provided that the job was either very enjoyable or totally boring, and he had chosen to correct the proofs of the English edition of *The Temple Scroll* as being an ideal combination of both requirements.

This most voluminous of the Dead Sea Scrolls has had a circuitous history even by the standards of the other discoveries in the caves of Qumran since 1947. Removed from one of them in the 1950s, it remained for many years in the illegal possession of a Jordanian antique dealer and then, in 1960, was offered to Yadin for sale by an anonymous American clergyman. The negotiations fell through two years later, but Yadin did not forget this mysterious document, and while the Six Day War was still in progress in June 1967, he traced the manuscript with the help of the Israeli intelligence to a shoe-box in Bethlehem. Invoking Jordanian law, he confiscated the Temple Scroll (although the dealer later received $105,000 for it) and in 1977 published the *editio princeps* in Hebrew, in three volumes. An English edition was planned from the start, but its publication, also in three volumes, did not occur until shortly before Yadin's death in June 1984. His highly readable popular account of the discovery and description of the manuscript, *The Temple Scroll: The hidden law of the Dead Sea sect*, has appeared posthumously, in February of this year.

The Temple Scroll, with its sixty-seven columns of Hebrew text, is the most extensive of all the Qumran manuscripts, now generally recognized as deriving from the ancient Jewish sect of the Essenes. Twenty-eight feet in all, it is even longer than the great Isaiah roll, which includes all sixty-six chapters of that biblical prophecy. As its name, chosen by Yadin, implies, it deals with the architectural plan of the Temple, the various buildings and the furniture of the Sanctuary, the year's festivals and the sacrifices associated with them, and the purity regulations affecting the Temple and its city, Jerusalem is never named; but neither is it in the Pentateuch. The Scroll ends with a recasting of the laws of Deuteronomy 17–23:1, a substantial section of which is devoted to a revised edition of the scriptural statutes relating to the Jewish king.

The new document purports to be a first account, couched in non-apocalyptic language, of divine commandments concerning the construction of a solid earthly Temple as opposed to the mobile tent-Sanctuary of Exodus 25–31 and 35–40, and to the eschatological or celestial Sanctuary of Ezekiel 40–48 and the documents from Qumran about the Heavenly Jerusalem. A new Temple, distinct from that described in the Scroll, is mentioned once in the work as an edifice to be constructed by God himself. The sole indirect scriptural antecedent of the Temple Scroll material is 1 Chronicles 28:11–19, where David instructs Solomon concerning the divers architectural units and furniture of the first Temple, on the basis of divinely autographed plans which he has somehow received.

The presentation of a body of systematic Temple law is an innovation in itself, even though a great deal of it consists in a collection of scriptural statutes regarding the desert Sanctuary and Ezekiel's future Temple dispersed in various sections of the Hebrew Bible. But even in such passages, the Scroll often departs from Scripture or inserts a considerable number of significant additions. For instance, there is an allusion in a damaged passage at the beginning of column 46 to sacred bird-scarers, articles erected on the roof of the Temple to frighten off birds from the holy precincts. The details have unfortunately disappeared, but the existence of devices of this sort is attested elsewhere in ancient Jewish literature. Eupolemus, a Jewish Hellenist of the second century BC reports that King Solomon fitted 400 bronze bells over the Temple to discourage the birds from settling or nesting in the Sanctuary and polluting it with their droppings. For the same purpose, Herod furnished his Temple with "sharp golden spikes", according to the historian Flavius Josephus, writing in the first century AD. If we are to believe the description of the Temple in the Mishnah, these spikes were one cubit (eighteen inches) high.

Moving from a curiosity in the domain of ancient realia to a law with odd social implications, the Temple Scroll proclaims that the three days of ritual uncleanness after every act of sexual intercourse, even between husband and wife, entail a prohibition on entering, prior to purification, not only the Sanctuary but even the city of the Temple. It would follow from this that if persons were refused admission within seventy-two hours from intercourse, *a fortiori* no sex relations could ever be tolerated within the city's walls. The same rule, which is attested in another Dead Sea document, the Damascus Rule, makes plain that the prohibition was absolute and not restricted to sectarian pilgrims to "the city of the Sanctuary". Consequently, the city must have been closed to all women residents, although ritually clean women and sexually abstinent married couples could stay temporarily within the city limits during their visit to the Temple. It would seem that not even continuous self-imposed celibacy entitled a man and his pre-menopausal wife to the status of permanent inhabitants since no provision is made in the Scroll for a special area outside the holy city for menstruating women, but only for lepers and men suffering from a venereal discharge or nocturnal pollution. Such a reserve is by contrast established for women during their periods and after childbirth in the proximity of all the other cities of Israel.

All these unusual rules, coupled with the statute of the Qumran War Scroll forbidding women and under-age boys to approach the fighting men of the community during their final campaign against the army of Satan, point to a religious society in which celibacy was not uncommon. In an ancient Jewish religious setting, this inevitably suggests the Essene sect.

Still on the subject of marriage, the Temple Scroll firmly imposes monogamy on the Jewish king. He "shall not take another wife in addition to [his first wife], for she alone shall be with him all the days of her life. But if she dies, he shall take another from the house of his father." This law, which is substituted for Deuteronomy 17:17 ("He shall not multiply wives to himself"), represents an ideology far distant from the view adopted by the rabbis of the Mishnah. These sages imagined that the reasonable size of a royal harem was one that would accommodate up to eighteen wives, a figure obtained by means of exegetical acrobatics. But the Temple Scroll is once more corroborated by the Qumran Damascus Rule, which also advocates monogamy, and not merely for the king, deriving the law ultimately from "the principle of the creation", namely that the marriage of Adam and Eve arranged by God was monogamous. An interpretative reasoning of this sort necessarily recalls the

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Gospel use of "Male and female created he them" (Mark 10:6; Matthew 19:4) as an argument for outlawing divorce followed by remarriage, ie, consecutive polygamy.

These examples illustrate how well the Temple Scroll fits into the historical and religious context of Qumran and inter-Testamental Judaism. Yadin convincingly dates the manuscript to the turn of the eras, but traces the composition of the work to the second half of the second century BC. In this, he relies not only on internal evidence, but also on older manuscript fragments retrieved from Caves 4 and 11. Yadin used the latter in his publication (having been authorized to do so, he states, by the late Fr R. de Vaux, the first chief editor of the texts deposited in the Rockefeller Museum in what used to be called the Old City of Jerusalem). Nevertheless, the inclusion of this additional material in his edition provoked a public outburst from a Dutch scholar who had laboured for years on a few badly damaged, and in themselves unintelligible, manuscript scraps from Cave 11, wholly unaware that they actually belonged to the Temple Scroll.

At the end of the magisterial introductory volume of the *editio princeps* and in the final section of the volume addressed to the general reader, Yadin raises the crucial question of the Scroll's status in the Qumran (Essene) community. Was it held to be a "rewritten Bible", or *midrash*, ie, Scripture passages assembled according to their subject-matter, rearranged, reinterpreted and supplemented by regulations of non-biblical origin; or did it count from start to finish as the "word of God", another book of the Law or Torah? In his view, which is shared by other experts, the Temple Scroll was meant and accepted as Holy Scripture by the Essenes. It was probably the "Sealed Book of the Law" mentioned in the Damascus Rule. In support of his thesis, Yadin notes that when necessary the compiler of the Temple Scroll ensures that commandments are explicitly linked with God by formulating them in the first person singular. He does so regularly in the case of the additional (non-biblical) precepts, but even the scriptural ordinances, especially from Deuteronomy, are rephrased by him so as to make their divine origin crystal clear. Thus instead of the Deuteronomic wording where (in 16:20) Moses speaks on God's behalf: "that you may . . . inherit the land *which the Lord your God* gives you", the Temple Scroll reads: "that you may . . . inherit the land *which I* [=God] *give you*".

This is a strong argument because, while the grouping of parallel laws is a familiar feature in Jewish exegesis, the reformulation of the biblical diction itself is not. An alternative explanation of this remarkable phenomenon, namely that the commandments are laid on the lips of God to demonstrate that they are divine, and not merely Mosaic, would demand a polemical situation in regard to the origin of the Torah which is nowhere noticeable at Qumran. To reinforce his thesis, Yadin adduces an additional argument. He claims that the use of the more recent "square" Hebrew letters for writing the name of God (YHWH) in the Temple Scroll corresponds to the scribal rules of the Dead Sea biblical manuscripts, whereas in the non-canonical Qumran works the same Tetragram is spelt with proto-Hebraic characters. This is one of the few cases where Yadin is factually incorrect, more so in the popular version than in the *editio princeps*, where a footnote eviscerates the supplementary proof.

Apart from such minor blemishes and some repetitiousness, the only serious criticism, to be addressed to the publishers rather than to the author, of the three-volume *Temple Scroll* is its exorbitant price ($240). The popular book, fascinating though it is, is no substitute, since it contains not even the English translation, let alone the Hebrew text, of the document. Both works are identically entitled *The Temple Scroll*, which is a tiresome and confusing oversight.

The three imposing volumes of *The Temple Scroll* published from Jerusalem represent a landmark: they bring into public view the last of the major Dead Sea Scrolls. They are also, alas, Yadin's swan-song, the final achievement of one of the most versatile leading figures associated with Qumran. His was a character of several dimensions. He was an outstanding soldier who rose to the office of Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defence Forces in his early thirties. He was also a brilliant and extremely lucky archaeologist, with the finds at Hazor and at Masada to his credit. Then in his later years, and to the regret of the majority of his academic friends, he entered politics, once more reaching almost to the top, serving as Deputy Prime Minister from 1977 to 1981. For many, however, his name will remain bound to the most fascinating Hebrew manuscript discovery of this century. His association with it goes back, indirectly, to the fateful day in 1947 when his father, Eleazar Sukenik, Professor of Archaeology at the Hebrew University, took his life in his hands, against the military advice of his son and to the consternation of his wife, and went to Arab Bethlehem to acquire the first three Dead Sea Scrolls.

Sukenik was the author of the earliest preliminary publications of the shorter Isaiah Scroll, the War of the Sons of Light and the Thanksgiving Hymns. I can still recall the awe and emotion with which, as a graduate student freshly engaged on Scrolls research, I watched the slides of unpublished treasures which he showed during the lecture he gave in Louvain in 1951. He died three years later and the 1954 official edition of his manuscripts appeared posthumously. In that same year, his son Yigael (Yadin was his code name in the Jewish underground movement before 1948) managed after clever secret negotiations to purchase four other Scrolls smuggled to the United States by an Arab church dignitary and advertised in the *Wall Street Journal* as an "ideal gift to an educational or religious institution". With this feather in his cap, Yadin returned to Jerusalem to finish his PhD thesis on the Qumran War Scroll, a suitable subject for a former general. Having obtained the degree, he next set out to edit, with N. Avigad, the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon, one of the four Scrolls he had brought back from America. Thus, counting the Temple Scroll, father and son were responsible for the edition of half of the major Qumran documents.

Yadin also published a fragmentary manuscript of the Hebrew Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Ben Sira from Masada, a collection of Qumran phylacteries and a preliminary study of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Nabatean letters and documents, many of which date to the period of the second rebellion of the Jews against Rome under the leadership of Simeon ben Kosiba, or Bar Kokhba, in AD 132–135. Yadin turned out to be somewhat remiss in completing the publication of these sensational manuscripts, which he discovered in 1960–61, and to prick his conscience I appended a slightly unorthodox postscript to the preface to the jubilee volume which I edited in 1982 to mark his sixty-fifth birthday: "If *dona ferentes* may be permitted a favour in return: may we please see the long awaited complete edition of the Bar Kokhba documents – *soon, in our days!*"

This request has remained unanswered, yet the debt to the world of learning which Yadin left behind is insignificant compared with that which is being accumulated by the rival international team, recruited in 1953 by Fr de Vaux to edit, under Jordanian auspices, the manuscript fragments discovered in the various Qumran caves, especially Cave 4. For Caves 1 and 11 separate, and more satisfactory, arrangements have been made, but otherwise only three of the eight scholars commissioned over thirty years ago have acquitted themselves wholly or in part of their duties, having issued to date four of the projected twenty volumes of text. Of the remaining five experts, one withdrew quite soon; another died in 1980 without publishing his assignment; the other three are alive but, as far as is known, nowhere near to completion of their by now very stale task. Eight years ago I defined this situation as a "lamentable state of affairs" and warned that it was "likely to become the academic scandal *par excellence* of the twentieth century" unless drastic measures were taken at once. Regrettably, this has not happened and the present chief editor of the fragments has in the meantime gone on the record as one who rejects as unjust and unreasonable any criticism regarding the delay.

As has been noted, with the appearance of *The Temple Scroll* the last major Qumran document has reached the world of scholarship; the material still unpublished consists only of fragments (though some may be of importance). With the passing of the Sukenik – Yadin era, we may therefore pause and take stock. In the late 1940s, the first Dead Sea Scrolls finds were described as revolutionary. How should they be assessed today?

Whether the term "revolutionary" is apposite as the general characterization of Qumran's contribution to biblical, inter-Testamental and Jewish-rabbinic studies is arguable. Nevertheless one conclusion is above controversy: thanks to the Scrolls, our factual knowledge of the textual history of the Bible has been extended by a millennium. While the learned still await the publication of several volumes of scriptural fragments, they can already be sure that the traditional uniform Hebrew text of Scripture, established and promulgated probably in the last decades of the first century AD, was preceded by an epoch during which at least three discrepant types of Hebrew text coexisted. How this diversity came about is still subject to debate. But there can be little doubt that the ultimate unity of the canonical text resulted from an intervention by a religious authority which decided that henceforward one of the parallel traditions was to be recognized as orthodox and valid, the rest being accounted erroneous and corrupt. Fundamentalists of every denomination will have to face up to these concrete data furnished by Qumran.

In the field of inter-Testamental Judaism, in addition to a better insight, through the recovery of their Hebrew or Aramaic originals, into some of the Pseudepigrapha previously extant only in secondary or tertiary translations, and an improved access to the prehistory of rabbinic and New Testament Bible interpretation, the greatest novelty is that scholars are now provided with direct knowledge of a Jewish religious community. Its way of life is revealed by archaeological finds, and its ideas and beliefs by literature preserved in the original languages and in contemporary manuscripts. Our acquaintance with the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots or Judaeo-Christians is nowhere near as immediate or fully documented as that of the Qumran Essenes.

As for the New Testament and nascent Christianity, the Scrolls have helped to clarify many sayings and customs. They have above all afforded us a glimpse of the genesis of a separatist religious group in inter-Testamental Palestine, of a phenomenon, that is to say, almost exactly parallel to the history of the primitive Church. The conflict of Jesus and his immediate followers with the Jewish authorities of the day closely resembles the clash between the Teacher of Righteousness and his disciples and the Wicked Priest, personalities described in the various Bible commentaries of the sect. Likewise, the internal squabble within the community established by the Teacher puts into perspective the in-fighting between, on the one hand, Palestinian Jewish Christians and, on the other, semi-Judaized Gentiles and pagans with no previous Jewish associations converted by Paul. Regarded from such an angle, the formation of Christianity and the emergence of Christian anti-Judaism are bound to appear in a different light.

On a more personal note, the Dead Sea Scrolls have offered to my generation of students an immense opportunity. Yigael Yadin, beyond doubt the most scintillating of the younger researchers in the early 1950s, is the first to have departed from among us. *The Temple Scroll* is his worthy memorial. But it is also a reminder to us all, especially to those who have been tardy in responding to the challenge of their privileged task, that time is running out.

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KIM CHERNIN
In My Mother's House
309pp. Virago. £10.95 (paperback, £4.95).
0 86068 563 2

Kim Chernin is a writer whose work transcends simple categories, as a glance at her background suggests. Described recently as a "consultant on writing projects and eating disorders", she has a bachelor's degree in English and a private practice as a therapist in Berkeley, California. Of her two previous books, one is a feminist critique entitled *Womansize: Reflections on the tyranny of slenderness*, the other a collection of poems called *The Hunger Song*. Her latest book, *In My Mother's House*, continues this propensity to mix genres, attempting to break down the barriers between fact and fiction, prose and poetry, biography and autobiography in describing the life of her mother, Rose Chernin. The book is narrated on two levels, with Rose's monologues about her past periodically interrupted by scenes set in a later, present-tense period, itself stretching over the years during which this book was written. Mother and daughter both have stories to tell each other, and the act of telling them brings the two closer together, or so we are to believe.

Rose Chernin was the eldest daughter in a family of impoverished Russian-Jewish immigrants. Like so many of her generation, she struggled for an education, went out to work at an early age, became involved in the Labour movement and joined the Communist Party. The happiest time of her life was probably the two years she spent in Russia with her husband, Paul Kusnitz, an engineer invited to work on the Moscow underground; only the news of the 1934 Longshoremen's Union strike lured her back to the United States under the impression that the revolution was about to begin there. Twenty years later, she still belonged to the Party and she became famous as one of the Communists prosecuted under the Smith Act, which outlawed Party membership; she was also threatened with revocation of her US citizenship which she had received in 1929. The case finally went to the Supreme Court, which decided in favour of the defendants, and found the Smith Act to be unconstitutional.

Growing up in the shadow of her mother's notoriety, Kim was a dutiful daughter, but later rebelled against her parents' political beliefs; unlike the activist students of the 1960s, she preferred to commit herself to art rather than left-wing politics, with which she was all too familiar from childhood. Now twice divorced, with a college-age daughter of her own, Kim Chernin has attempted a lyric meditation on her family history and a sympathetic re-creation of her mother's life, in the style of her Yiddish-intonated speech. The undertaking is ambitious and risky. In the modern-day inter-chapters, where Kim meets with her mother and various other relatives, we see too many small gestures invested with enormous significance, particularly her mother's deep, philosophic, sighs: "'Ach, my sister, my sister', my mother explodes, 'who can explain this life?'" Then, a few lines later: "'She was like Mama', she whispers. 'Did you ever think of it? Like mama.'" A little of this goes a very long way indeed.

One small but puzzling piece of unacknowledged fictionalizing in the book is Chernin's reference to her first husband, David Netboy, as "Peter Minkov", a curious lapse from veracity in a writer for whom names are so important. One wonders what other elements of her story have been fictionalized as well. But it is hard not to like the author and admire her attempt to make poetry out of her family history. Whatever the flaws in the execution, the book conveys an impressive sincerity and purity of aim. In that sense Kim Chernin is very much her mother's daughter.

The vicissitudes of Yiddish

Hugh Denman

Speaking some years ago at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan, Isaac Bashevis Singer recalled that some time in the 1920s, when he was a young man working at the editorial offices of *Literarishe bleter* in Warsaw, an older colleague had jested that some day the Jews would have a land of their own where they would be free to behave just like the *goyim*. This prediction was received with hollow laughter, but the last thing that occurred to any of those present, said Bashevis, was that this might be precisely what would happen. The founders of Israel, he explained, had been guilty of a grievous blunder when they chose Hebrew as its official language, thus obliging the language planners to create out of the root material of the Holy Tongue a "soulless Esperanto" hastily calqued on Russian, German and other Western languages so as to furnish all the phraseology necessary to the life of a modern state. It was tragic prejudice alone that had led them to pass over the claims of Yiddish, a language looking back on a thousand years of uninterrupted tradition which during recent centuries had acquired all the requisite means to satisfy contemporary needs while at the same time being Jewish through and through.

The relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish has been fraught with often bitter controversy for the past two centuries since the *maskilim* (the members of the *Haskalah* movement, the Jewish version of the Enlightenment) made their first attacks on Yiddish. From a more dispassionate viewpoint much of the acrimony can seem otiose and, in fact, the pioneer Yiddish literary critic Bal-makhshoves had it about right in his series of essays, *Undzer tsvey-shprakhike literatur*, published in the *Petrograder togblat*, in which he stressed the essential unity of Ashkenazic culture and the symbiosis of the two languages. Be that as it may, the fact is that one fails to grasp a fundamental factor in Jewish history if one neglects the role which has been played by bilingualism.

One of the more curious things that emerges from reading *De vulgari eloquentia*, or which is implicit for that matter in the encounter with Guido da Montefeltro in canto XXVII of the *Inferno*, is that Dante was of the firm opinion that Virgil, though he wrote in Latin, in everyday life spoke the Italian of his birthplace, Mantua, with much the same accent as that of Dante's Mantuan acquaintances. In this light it may come as something less of a surprise that we can read in the Talmud that Adam spoke Aramaic. In Ashkenazic literature one can even come across the notion that the language of ordinary social intercourse in biblical times was Yiddish. Such misconceptions are striking evidence of the extent to which bilingualism came to be taken for granted as an immutable aspect of Jewish life. (We are speaking here of *internal* bilingualism, the concurrent use of Hebrew as the language of prayer and study and of another Jewish language – be it Ladino, Judaeo-Arabic or Yiddish – as the means of daily communication.) Of the many such languages which have come into existence within this bilingual context and as a result of interaction between Jewish communities and their Gentile linguistic environment, Yiddish is certainly the most important both in terms of the number of its speakers and of the richness of its literary culture. It can be said that Yiddish originated when Jews emigrating from northern France came into contact with Middle High German at a time when it was just beginning to evolve from Old High German. But Yiddish should also be seen as the culmination of a process that had been set in motion around the time of the Babylonian Exile, when the bilingualism first appeared that was destined to endure until the present century as a permanent and characteristic feature of Jewish life.

Jewish languages should not be thought of as being simply derived "horizontally" from their Gentile counterparts (let alone as being a debased form of the latter). Max Weinreich in his monumental *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (1973; English translation: Chicago University Press, 1980) graphically describes, for example, how the development of Judaeo-Old French (or Western Laaz, as he more accurately identifies it) from Judaeo-Latin closely parallels and at the same time is strongly influenced by the evolution of French from Latin. Similarly, Judaeo-Latin owed much of its character to the fact that it had originated in the mouths of former speakers of Yavanish (Judaeo-Greek). In any case, Western Laaz was definitely not derived directly from coeval Old French. It was largely on the basis of such "vertical" evolution that Solomon Birnbaum, the doyen of Yiddish scholars, writing as early as 1931, rejected the then prevailing idea of Yiddish as having branched off from German at an indeterminate date and advanced the now generally accepted view that it had been a distinct and independent language right from the start when Jews began to migrate into the valleys of the Rhine and Moselle in the ninth century. Despite the fact that the earliest, fragmentary written records date from several centuries later, it make sense to assume that the lexicon, morphology and syntax of the nascent language had a unique stamp put upon them by the Western Laaz substratum which contained within itself echoes of the whole Jewish phylogeny: Judaeo-Latin reflecting Yavanish, Aramaic and ultimately Hebrew. In the matrix in which Yiddish was born, the sacral language, unmediated Hebrew, coexisting side by side with the colloquial tongue, represented a crucial extra dimension and constantly enriched Yiddish with new loan words.

After spreading along the Main and the Danube into central and southern Germany and acquiring from the dialects of these areas a relatively uniform combination of features peculiar to itself, Yiddish underwent a further mutation by coming into contact with Slav languages. This was the result of new waves of migration which during the course of some three or four centuries took the bulk of German Jews to Central Europe, where until the Second World War they constituted the majority of world Jewry.

In the German-speaking lands in the west, where a form of Yiddish lacking the Slav component continued to be spoken well into the eighteenth century (and in some instances beyond), the almost total demise of the language was largely the result of the advocacy of Standard German for all secular purposes by the *Haskalah*, and by Moses Mendelssohn in particular. In the east, however, the *Haskalah* unwittingly gave Yiddish culture a critically significant stimulus. The ideals of the Enlightenment, it was believed, could be propagated among the Jewish masses of Central Europe only by means of a didactic literature which employed Yiddish; but the propaedeutic tool before long developed into the vehicle of an increasingly autonomous literary culture, the moralistic writings of *maskilim* like Yitskhok Meyer Dik and Elyakum Tsunzer paving the way for the astonishing efflorescence of Mendele Moykher Sforim and Sholem Aleykhem.

By the middle of the nineteenth century Yiddish had almost completely disappeared from Germany, where the *Aufklärung* and the endeavour to demonstrate fitness for equal citizenship had given rise to a systematic adoption of the ideals of *Bildung* and of the German middle-class way of life. Not only was Yiddish shunned, but all traces of Jewish accent or gesture – the despised *Gemauschel* – were studiously eschewed. German Jews made every effort to dissociate themselves from the *Ostjuden* of Galicia, Prussian Poland and the Russian Empire. The assimilated Western Jew felt threatened by the outlandish demeanour of his Eastern co-religionists who were increasingly to be seen on the streets of German cities after the Russian pogroms of the 1880s. Yiddish came to be associated with the ghetto, the kaftan and Talmudic sophistry, even with absence of hygiene and with moral depravity, seen as characteristics of a medieval barbarism from which the German of the Mosaic faith had himself so recently escaped and of which he preferred not to be too insistently reminded.

Such views did not, however, go unchallenged. Nathan Birnbaum, the father of Solomon Birnbaum, had been one of the earliest Zionists. But he became disenchanted with the movement's exclusive preoccupation with Palestine and broke with Herzl. He turned instead to the concept of diaspora nationalism or cultural autonomism. Having rejected assimilationism in the past he now repudiated the plans of the Zionists to create a new hypothetical Jewish nation in the future. The real nation, he contended, already existed in Eastern Europe, possessed of an authentically Jewish culture passed down through the medium of the Yiddish language. The task of the deracinated Western Jew was to participate in a kind of reverse assimilation and to reintegrate himself into this vital tradition.

The Khalyastre: Mendl Elkin, Perets Hirshbeyn, Uri Tsvi Grinberg, Perets Markish, Melekh Ravitsh and I. J. Singer in Warsaw, 1922, reproduced from Image Before My Eyes, A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864–1939 *by Lucjan Dobroszycki and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Schocken, 1977, published in cooperation with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research).*

It was Nathan Birnbaum who convened the famous Czernowitz Conference in August 1908 which brought together a cross-section of Jewish writers and intellectuals who all, from their various perspectives, were concerned with Yiddish. Though Mendele Moykher Sforim and Sholem Aleykhem were unable to attend, the novelist Sholem Ash, the dramatist Yankev Gordin, the poet Moyshe Leyb Halpern and the philologists Matesyohu Mizes and Noyekh Prilutski took part in the proceedings. Prilutski fought unsuccessfully for a resolution declaring Yiddish *the* national Jewish language. A compromise amendment to the effect that it was *a* national language was carried. Bitter wrangling between Hebraists and left-wing Bundists marred the conference, however, and it was unsuccessful in its primary aim of establishing a permanent organization to promote the language; but it did much to raise the status of Yiddish in the eyes of a wide public.

Although the way had been paved by the

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Czernowitz Conference, a specific institution devoted to the standardization of the language and to the pursuit of relevant educational and cultural aims did not come into existence until 1925 when the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) was founded in Berlin and located in Vilna. It fulfilled, in fact, many of the functions that are more normally the province of an academy of arts and sciences in the life of a sovereign nation. Later YIVO acquired regional centres in Berlin, Warsaw, Buenos Aires and New York and it was to the latter that the headquarters were transferred when the Nazis invaded. Almost miraculously a major portion of the original archives and library survived and eventually found its way to New York as the result of a combination of good fortune, guile and outstanding courage. Noyekh Prilutski, in fact, was tortured to death by the Gestapo who forced him to help them classify the materials looted from YIVO. Today YIVO occupies an imposing Louis Treize mansion on Fifth Avenue, formerly the showpiece of a railroad baron. A wide range of cultural activities of a very high standard continues to be mounted despite an exiguous budget. The building also houses the largest Yiddish research library in the world.

In early modern times Yiddish literature had very largely been the creation of three "classical" authors. Mendele Moykher Sforim and Sholem Aleykhem had brilliantly captured the pathos of traditional Jewish life in secular narrative that alternated between wit and nostalgia. Yitskhok Leybush Perets had given ironic, Neo-Romantic form to the stuff of Hassidic tales and Jewish legend. Suddenly, however, around the time of the First World War, a younger generation came to the fore in Europe and the United States writing in uncompromising Futurist, Expressionist and other avant-garde styles that were abreast of developments in the major European literatures.

In New York a group of poets calling themselves the *Inzikhistn* or "Introspectivists" built on foundations laid by the earlier modernist movement of *Di Yunge*. Sharing their rejection of social preoccupations, the *Inzikhistn*, of whom the most important were A. Glants-Leyeles and Yankev Glatshteyn, went on to shun regular metre and rhyme and to write highly subjective, almost solipsistic free verse. The immigrant poets of *Di Yunge* had had at best a rudimentary grasp of English, but the younger generation of writers had in many instances enjoyed the benefits of an American college education and they adopted an experimental style that was much influenced by Walt Whitman, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

In Warsaw, Perets Markish, Melekh Ravitsh, Perets Hirshbeyn, Uri Tsvi Grinberg and I. J. Singer (the elder brother of Bashevis Singer) had been dubbed a blasphemous *khalyastre* or "gang" by Hilel Tseytlin, a representative figure of the conventional religious establishment. They happily adopted this designation as the title of the avant-garde almanac in which they published their manifestos and bold Expressionist verse full of apocalyptic pessimism, often accompanied by charming miniature lino-cuts by Marc Chagall.

Kiev also saw an all too brief flowering of modernist literature after the Revolution. Here, amid the strife of the occupation, the Civil War and the Bolshevik reconquest, Dovid Bergelson and Der Nister wrote Impressionist and Symbolist novels and short stories. They edited the important collections *Eygis* and *Oyfgang* which included not only their own prose works but also contributions from the poets Dovid Hofshteyn, Leyb Kvitko and Perets Markish (prior to his move to Warsaw) that were structurally and linguistically innovative while drawing heavily on the themes of Russian Futurism, at the same time recapitulating Romantic and Expressionist developments in the European lyric that had previously been absent from Yiddish literature.

Bergelson, Kvitko and Der Nister, irked by Marxist literary regimentation, left Kiev in 1920 and moved to Berlin, which in the early years of the Weimar period became an important centre of eclectic Yiddish culture and of Yiddish publishing. Not only were many works published in the original but also in excellent German translations that for the first time brought Yiddish authors to the attention of a wide readership in the West and won for them much critical acclaim. Alfred Döblin, for example, writing in the *Vossische Zeitung* in 1924, compared Bergelson very favourably with Flaubert. Yiddish drama too was successfully performed on the Berlin stage in German and also in the original when the famous *Vilner trupe* made a warmly received *tournée* through Germany, affording a large audience something, perhaps, of that sense of marvel that had such an impact on Kafka when Yitskhok Levi (the Jacques Kohn of Bashevis Singer's story) brought his more humble Lemberg players to the Café Savoy in the back streets of Prague in the autumn of 1911.

In the Soviet Union the NEP era (1921–28) saw a relaxation of ideological pressures accompanied by a period of unparalleled Yiddish publishing activity. Many writers who had left Russia in 1920 were encouraged to return with others who had not yet experienced Soviet rule. Their motives were, broadly speaking, twofold. They were left-wing in their sympathies and despite misgivings about Bolshevism felt that the bold social experiment taking place in Russia held hope for the future and deserved their support; and they were attracted by the remarkable opportunities for Yiddish literature the régime was providing.

In 1929, however, ideological rigidity once more re-asserted itself. Kvitko became the victim of a concerted campaign that closely paralleled the vilification of the Russian writer, Boris Pilnyak, who had published abroad a satire on the shortcomings of Soviet society. Kvitko's failing was that he had dared to poke fun at Moyshe Litvakov, the foremost representative of Marxist orthodoxy in the Yiddish literary world. Social Realism became the watchword. Markish and Der Nister also suffered notably as a result of the change in cultural climate which occurred in 1929 and the Yiddish writers often found themselves accused of "bourgeois nationalism".

The war years brought with them a renewed freedom for Yiddish authors to write about Jewish aspirations and even to mention the common cause of Jews everywhere in the struggle against Fascism. Soon after the war, however, the Zhdanovite repression bore down with particular severity on Yiddish cultural life, and by 1948 virtually all the leading figures of the Yiddish intelligentsia had been rounded up. Some, like Der Nister, died in prison; others, like the famous Yiddish actor Shloyme Mikhoels, died in faked accidents. Almost all those who were still alive on August 12, 1952, were shot on Stalin's orders. On that day Hofshteyn, Bergelson, Kvitko and about thirty others perished. Yiddish literary critics who had become the mouthpieces of the party's cultural policies shared the same fate.

Today many of Stalin's victims have been "rehabilitated". Yiddish books and periodicals appear once more on a limited scale. Fragments of the victims' manuscripts are occasionally published, suggesting that there may be more to come, still awaiting some future relaxation of Soviet cultural policies to see the light of day. A fair indication of the ambivalence of the Soviet authorities and of their tentative, mealy-mouthed attitudes to this question is provided by the appearance last year of the long-awaited Russian–Yiddish dictionary (M. A. Shapiro, I. G. Spivak and M. Y. Shuiman, Editors, *Russko-Evreyskiy Slovar'*, Russkiy Yazyk, Moscow, 1984) first announced in 1967. The manuscript was ready for publication in 1948. Elye Spivak, its editor-in-chief, was one of the many Yiddish intellectuals murdered together with the poets in August 1952, but the introduction gives the impression that the appearance of the dictionary was regrettably delayed by Spivak's natural death at an unspecified date.

While the fortunes of the language and of its culture have suffered under the impact of both physical destruction and the process of assimilation to English and Hebrew, scholarly interest has been in the ascendant. Solomon Birnbaum took up the first academic post in Yiddish at the University of Hamburg in 1922. From the outset considerable interest was shown by Gentile Germanists who were keenly aware not only of the intrinsic interest of the subject but also its potential for throwing light on the history of German. After the Second World War an increasing number of institutions in the United States and Canada incorporated Yiddish into their curricula. In Israel there was at first considerable hostility to Yiddish, which was seen as a possible threat to the status of Hebrew – at that stage still struggling to establish itself among a predominantly immigrant population. Hebrew's battle is now won [see Lewis Glinert, "The recovery of Hebrew", *TLS*, June 17, 1983], and it can afford to be more generous to its ailing former rival. Yiddish is taught at most Israeli universities and the Yiddish Department of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem has become possibly the most high-powered centre for Yiddish research in the world, vying in this respect with YIVO in New York. Comparatively recently, Yiddish has made a return to the German academic world – to the University of Trier in particular – and is also represented at Paris, Belfast and Oxford.

The number of secular speakers of Yiddish continues to decline from year to year, despite dedicated efforts to reverse the trend. Yiddish newspapers appear less frequently or cease publication altogether and the few living authors, such as Bashevis Singer, are only too well aware that it will soon be in translation only that they can hope to reach a significant audience. Yet it is definitely premature to write the epitaph for Yiddish, the number of whose native speakers may well, in fact, be increasing. The world of the Hassidim is effectively isolated from external influence. Many of them regard the use of Hebrew for everyday purposes as tantamount to blasphemy, rather as the more radical among them refuse to recognize the State of Israel since they believe that the re-establishment of a Jewish Kingdom in the Holy Land must await the coming of the Messiah. They regard Yiddish, however, as the hallowed vehicle of the traditional way of life and the ideal medium for scriptural exegesis – so much so that Sephardic adherents and the not infrequent proselytes have little choice but to learn Yiddish. Thus it is among the growing Hassidic communities of Mea Shearim, Williamsburg and Crown Heights, Antwerp and Stamford Hill that Yiddish may be expected to prosper in the twenty-first century.

From *shtetl* and underworld

Abraham Brumberg

There was a time when the collection, annotation and classification of Yiddish folk songs was a vigorous enterprise, pursued by ethnologists and ethnomusicologists as well as by dedicated amateur folklorists. But most of the earliest collections (the first appeared in 1901) were marred by a blithe disregard for scholarly method and accuracy. There were rich veins to be mined: in the introduction to his anthology *Yidishe folkslider* (Warsaw, 1914), for example, the literary scholar and folklorist N. Prilutski observed that his personal archive alone comprised 2,000 items. Over twenty years later Y. L. Cahan reported an inventory of more than 62,000 folklore items, thousands of them songs (*Yidisher folklor*, Vilna, 1938). By that time, professional standards had been firmly set and were firmly adhered to, especially in the two centres where the best work was produced: the YIVO (Yiddish Scientific Institute) in Vilna (transplanted to New York in 1940), and the Institute of Jewish Proletarian Culture of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev.

With most of the singers of Yiddish folk songs incinerated in Hitler's crematoria, with YIVO's musical archives largely destroyed, and with every vestige of Jewish cultural and communal activity uprooted by Stalin, another chapter of Jewish creativity and scholarship had come to an end. After the 1950s, however, work in this field was resumed. Under the sponsorship of YIVO, the American folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett taped and transcribed over 1,000 songs still lodged in the memory of the East European Jews who had emigrated to the United States early in this century. Her collection, deposited at YIVO, still awaits publication. In recent years a number of anthologies have appeared, most of them drawn from the collections compiled during the inter-war period in Poland and the Soviet Union. *Mir Trogn a Gezang – The New Book of Yiddish Songs*, compiled by Eleanor Gordon Mlotek, belongs more properly to the category of popular "song books" than to scholarship, but it is useful and delightful none the less. Its more than one hundred entries include a number of so-called *folkstimlekhe lider*, which is to say songs written by identifiable authors, but which entered the folklore repertoire through oral transmission.

The more ambitious *Anthology of Yiddish Folk Songs*, published by the Hebrew University, Jerusalem (two of whose four volumes are not out yet) is not without some vexing problems. Its (projected) 340 entries are drawn largely from the collection of A. Vinkhoyetsky, who emigrated from Leningrad to Israel in the early 1970s. A comparison between his manuscript (containing 245 items and a long introduction in Hebrew), available at the YIVO library in New York, and the Jerusalem anthology reveals some curious discrepancies. It is perhaps not surprising that a volume published in Israel would jettison the section of "Soviet Yiddish Folk Songs" (not all of them written in the spirit of socialist realism") in favour of one entitled "Home to Zion!". But why excise the section containing underworld songs? In doing so the editors continue a tradition of needless decorum (expressed in the Yiddish phrase *s'passt nit* – roughly, "it's not nice"), which impelled even such serious scholars as Y. L. Cahan to ignore one of the most fascinating genres of Yiddish folk music – the songs of thieves, pickpockets, gangsters, pimps and murderers. Arising from the criminal demi-monde of Odessa and Warsaw, these songs portray a world far from the idealized image of the *shtetl*, yet which is at the same time steeped in Jewish religious and secularized traditions. Some are acrid, some uproariously funny, and some poignant – as in, for instance, the song of a girl so hopelessly in love with her pimp that she allows herself to be taken off to the teeming whorehouses of Buenos Aires.

There is another flaw in the Israeli anthology – namely, the English versions of some of the texts, which in their pursuit of the "poetic" frequently violate the spirit of the originals. The first line of the charming *her nor du sheyn meydele* ("listen, pretty girl") is rendered into mock-Elizabethan: "Harken to me, my pretty maid". And who would have thought that the lines "I encountered a young lass / for whom my heart yearns" could serve for "My mother cooks dumplings / and I am made of meat / when I see a pretty girl / I get a yen for her" (*di mame kokht varenikes / un ikh bin gor fleyshik / derze ikh a sheyn meydele / krig ikh an iz kheyshik*)?

If the *Anthology of Yiddish Folk Songs*, for all its undoubted merits, sins on the side of sentimentality, *Old Jewish Folk Music* (University of Pennsylvania Press) suffers from an excessively diffident scholasticism. The editor, Mark Slobin, is a distinguished American ethnomusicologist, and his decision to translate and publish two collections of Yiddish folk songs and folk melodies, plus several essays on Jewish folk music, by the fine Soviet-Yiddish scholar Moshe Beregovski, is very laudable. Beregovski, who lived and worked most of his life in Kiev, was swept up by Stalin's anti-Jewish purge in the late 1940s, released on medical grounds in 1955, and died in 1961. What I find puzzling is Slobin's reluctance to analyse the dire ideological climate in which Beregovski and his colleagues pursued their work. To do so, he says in his introduction, would not be "entirely ethical". But his unwillingness to explore this theme detracts from what on the whole is an extraordinarily interesting and attractive volume.

Lastly, Ruth Rubin's *Voices of a People* (New York: McGraw-Hill) is a comprehensive and absorbing study of Yiddish folk songs set against the background of the history of East European Jewry. Rubin is both a serious scholar with a gift for lucid and engaging prose and a superb interpreter of Yiddish songs – many of which she performs *a cappella*. For the past forty years she has been sedulously collecting Yiddish folk songs among East European Jewish immigrants in Canada, and the United States; her archive of 132 tapes, deposited in the Library of Congress in Washington as well as at the YIVO library in New York, is a rich treasure indeed.

Ceremonial constructions

Michael Sullivan

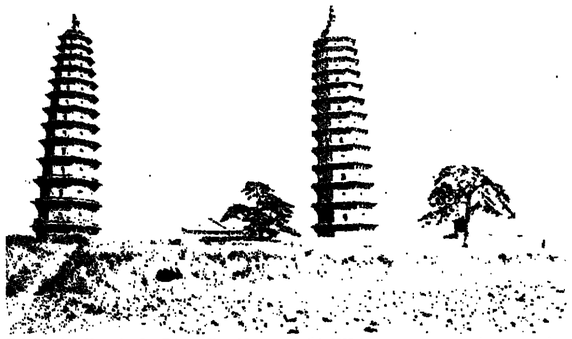
YU SHUOYUN (Editor)
Palaces of the Forbidden City
333pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Allen Lane. £50.
07139 1620 6

When Osvald Sirén published his monumental three-volume *The Imperial Palaces of Peking* in 1926 – a work surprisingly ignored in the bibliography of this book – he explained that one of his main purposes was to record, before it was too late, what was rapidly being destroyed by fire, vandalism and neglect. If he could take this book in his hands today, he would be astonished and comforted. For sixty years after he had described and photographed the decaying pavilions and silent grass-grown courtyards, the Forbidden City, thanks to energetic work by the Chinese government – and no doubt to the stimulus of the tourist trade – is probably in better shape than at any time since the eighteenth century.

This sumptuous volume makes no mention of earlier palaces on the site built by Kublai Khan and his Khitan and Jurchen predecessors, which is a pity because the layout of the City was largely determined by these, and precedents going back to the Northern Song palace at Kaifeng. It begins with the Emperor Yung-le's decision in 1406 to transfer the Ming capital from Nanking to Peking. By 1420 the three great ritual halls, for the building of which over a million men were drafted, had been completed, only to be totally destroyed a hundred days later in the first of many fires – the chronology lists no less than twenty-one big ones before 1889 – which almost led to the abandonment of the site and a return to Nanking. Although we think of the Forbidden City as a Ming palace, not one of the major buildings now stands in its original form. For example, the dominating Hall of Supreme Harmony, Taihedian, that we see today is a restoration of 1765 of a building that had already been burned down four times since its completion in 1420.

The recorded information on construction makes fascinating reading. It has been estimated that 200,000 tons of timber went into the building of the Ming palace, some of it taking three or four years to reach Peking by water from distant Sichuan. After the palace was completed there were still 380,000 pieces of timber in storage. Slabs of stone for stairways and paving were so heavy that they could not be moved even on rollers, so wells were dug at one li (⅓ mile) intervals, and in mid-winter water was thrown over the road where it instantly froze, to create a glassy sheet over which the slabs could be slid. Even then, it took 20,000 men more than twenty-eight days to bring one stone to Peking from a quarry in the vicinity.

Sadly little is known about Chinese professional architects before modern times, while none of their drawings, and practically no documents, survive. But it is recorded that the reconstruction after the fire of 1421 was entrusted to three master craftsmen: Lu Xiang, stonemason, Yang Qing, tiler, and Kuai Xiang, carpenter, under the master builder Cai Xin, to whom honour must go rather than to the eunuch official Kuan An who has traditionally got the credit for this gigantic project. Other names that have come down to us are those of Liang Jiu, who began the use of the inch-foot scale and of architectural scale models, and Lei Fada who in the seventeenth century invented models made of cardboard. Lei Fada further distinguished himself at a solemn ceremony when the central beam of the reconstructed Taihedian was being hoisted into place in the presence of the Kangxi Emperor. Mortise and tenon did not fit, so the elderly Lei Fada climbed up, clad in his official robes, and trimmed them with a hatchet. The young emperor, instead of having Lei executed on the spot as some of his predecessors might well have done, immediately made him a Director of Works – an incident that helps to explain why Kangxi is regarded as one of China's greatest rulers.



Twin Pagodas at Yung-chao Ssu, Taiyuan, Shansi Province, built in 1595, have a more accentuated appearance than that normally found in multi-storied pagodas of the Ming dynasty: this is due to the overhang of the eaves which cast particularly deep shadows; taken from A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture: A study of the development of its structural system and the evolution of its types *by Liang Ssu-Ch'eng and edited by Wilma Fairbank (202pp. MIT Press. £27.45. 0 262 12103 4).*

Fascinating as these details are, it is the illustrations that make this so valuable a record, from the beautifully drawn aerial double-spread at the beginning, through the wealth of superb colour photographs (some of which had already appeared in Wango Weng's excellent *The Palace Museum, Peking*, also omitted from the bibliography), to the architectural plans and details at the end. They reveal clearly a feature of the Forbidden City that must strike every visitor: the dramatic contrast between the formal grandeur of the huge ceremonial halls and courts, and the intimate scale of the living quarters, which consist of a series of small, tightly packed courtyards where the many households of the extended imperial family could enjoy some privacy. The exquisite little study in which Qianlong enjoyed masterpieces of ancient calligraphy is little more than twelve feet square. Much less known to the visitors are the palace shrines, dealt with in a section of the book that gives a vivid impression of the ecumenicism of religious observance at the top. There are Confucian halls for the worship of ancestors, a Building of the Ancestors of Brahma where Manjusri was honoured. Daoist chapels, and sumptuous Buddhist shrines decorated with sculpture and wall-paintings that reflect the Manchus' strong Lamaist leanings. The circular altar in the Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers, here seen in all its exotic detail for the first time, must be one of the most extraordinary votive structures in the Buddhist world.

The illustrations conclude with a long section on construction and decoration. Most interesting here are the details of bracketing, roof-tiles and ceilings, including both coffered ceilings (here misleadingly called "caissons") and stone domes, the latter elsewhere confined almost entirely to tombs: I know of only one other domed Buddhist hall, in the Wan-nian Temple on Mount Omei in Sichuan. Too much space, however, is given to the elaborate polychrome decoration, chiefly floral, beloved of the tourist. Covering every inch of panels, brackets and beams, it is unsatisfying because it makes no architectural sense; it is simply applied in endless pretty variety with little or no feeling for the function of the member it decorates. Or is its purpose to conceal the poverty of the architectural detail? For by the Qing Dynasty the bracketing system, which in Tang and Song had performed a dynamic structural function akin to that of Gothic vaulting, had shrunk to little more than a decorative frieze of intricate and enormously heavy carpentry running along under the eaves; while nowhere in Qing building do we find the daring interlocking of pavilions, galleries and roofs at different levels that makes Tang and Song architecture seem so adventurous by comparison. The Palace buildings belong to what the architectural historian Liang Ssu-ch'eng rightly called the Period of Rigidity. But if we stand well back, the rather tame and fussy detail is lost, and we are overwhelmed by the scale and grandeur of the whole. This splendid book helps to explain why the Forbidden City was the heart and symbol of the Empire, as indeed it still is today.

Dynastic decorations

Nigel Wood

WILLIAM WATSON
Tang and Liao Ceramics
283pp, with 40 colour plates and 279 black-and-white illustrations and line drawings.
Thames and Hudson. £50.
0 500 23408 6

The brilliant civilization of Tang China (AD 618–907) is probably best known in the West through its spectacular lead-glazed tomb figurines and pots which were unearthed by railway construction in north China in the early years of this century. These burial wares of the Tang nobility were products of one of the most prosperous and cosmopolitan societies of the ancient world, and the influences that can be traced in Tang ceramics are remarkable for their variety and range. Besides the sturdy and vigorous forms refined from China's long tradition of utilitarian wares, Tang potters borrowed ideas from Persian Sasanian-style metalwork, from distantly-derived Hellenistic relief ornament, as well as from Buddhist images and forms from India. Even the leather bottles of the Western nomads were re-created as moulded pottery flasks to satisfy Tang taste for the romantic and the exotic. The story of Tang ceramics, with its unusual blend of Far Eastern and West Asian design, is therefore a complex and interesting one, and William Watson, as both a classicist and former Professor of Chinese Art at London University, is especially well equipped to tackle its intricacies. His *Tang and Liao Ceramics* is a very valuable book indeed: the range of scholarship, the precision of the language, the choice of illustrations (and their superb reproduction) all combine to make it one of the most thorough and detailed studies of Chinese ceramics now in print.

The book is particularly good on the Tang burial earthenwares. These were often decorated with green, blue, amber and straw-coloured lead-glazes – splashed and streaked in a most vital and expressive manner. The author suggests an influence here from Central Asian tie-dyed and batik textiles, with contemporary appreciation of a more impressionistic approach to painting perhaps contributing to their acceptance as court and burial wares. But, despite their appeal, and their abundance in the world's museums, Tang lead-glazed wares are far from being typical of Tang ceramic production. The main ceramics of Tang China, were actually high-fired wares that included the world's first porcelains, as well as early examples of the grey-green celadons that became a staple of the later Song dynasties. Much of the book is concerned with these wares, as well as the more ordinary Tang stonewares with plain brown, cream and green-brown glazes. They all share the same sturdy and stylish confidence of form, having escaped the archaisms of the preceeding Sui and Han dynasties, while not yet showing the more reflective character of the later Song wares.

Tang style in ceramics survived in north China, in the area now known as Inner Mongolia and Liaoning province, under the rule of the Liao, and one chapter of the book is devoted to these wares. Some of China's finest white porcelains were made in this district and for the most part they were direct copies of silver shapes. The heavy debt that Tang potters owed to metalwork (especially to silver) is actually a recurring theme in *Tang and Liao Ceramics* but it is a minor flaw of the book that there are no plates of silver originals to illustrate the point. However, the illustrations of the ceramics themselves are magnificent. The author has drawn his examples from collections all over the world, including many recent discoveries from China, and the ability of modern printing to convey the tactile properties of clay and glaze, and their subtleties of colour and surface, is most impressive.

Professor Watson describes the characteristics and development of virtually every known Tang kiln, and then considers the wares as a whole according to their forms. The book is closely written and demands (and amply rewards) thorough reading. Perhaps only in the area of ceramic technology is there some uncertainty, but this is understandable as most of the hard information on this subject is very recent indeed. The style of the book complements Mary's Tregear's quiet and intuitive approach in *Song Ceramics* (the book's companion volume) and the cumulative effect of the detailed scholarship, the sumptuous format, and the superb illustrations, is a book of quite exceptional quality.

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O quanta qualia

John Cottingham

SYDNEY SHOEMAKER
Identity, Cause and Mind: Philosophical essays
365pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50 (paperback, £8.95).
0521259193

We have two apparently conflicting ideas about mental states. One is that they are constituted by a certain subjective phenomenological character – that what matters crucially about a pain, for example, is "how it feels from the inside". The other is that mental states are in principle analysable in perfectly objective terms (for example, using descriptions of bodily behaviour, or neurophysiological events, or functional properties). One of the principal themes of *Identity, Cause and Mind*, Sydney Shoemaker's distinguished collection of essays (all published previously and spanning the years 1968–81), is that it may be possible to reconcile these seemingly clashing views. Professor Shoemaker, following the prevailing paradigm among contemporary philosophers of mind, takes the most plausible account of the mind to be some version of functionalism, a view which identifies mental properties not with specific neurophysiological properties of the brain but with properties which can be specified in purely logical, organizational and causal terms, and in a way that is neutral with respect to the question of how they are physically "realized". The most recent versions of functionalism draw heavily on the analogy between mental structures and computer programs, but the type of functionalism which Shoemaker defends claims merely that mental states can be explicated in terms of their causal relations to "inputs, outputs and other mental states"; if what Shoemaker calls the "strong" version of this thesis, the reference to "other mental states" is eventually to be eliminated, so that no mental terminology will be left in the *explicans*.

But can such an account cope with the seemingly subjective, "qualitative" aspects of our mental life – with what have come to be known as qualia. (*Qualia* include such distinctive experiences as those characteristically associated with stubbing one's toe, or smelling a rose or tasting a pineapple.) If *qualia* are an essential part of what it is to be in a certain mental state, then the functionalist faces the problem that his proposed analysis seems logically compatible with their absence. Could we not imagine an alien (a "Martian") who was functionally isomorphic with me in respect of pain (ie, had all the relevant causal inputs and outputs and was in an organizational state which was causally related in the appropriate way to other such states), and yet completely lacked, when it stubbed its toe, any characteristic *quale* of the kind I (and you) know so well? Shoemaker argues that there are insuperable epistemological difficulties in supposing the possibility of such "Martian pain" or "ersatz pain" (pain which lacked the appropriate *quale*). For part of the functionalist analysis of pain is that it gives rise to certain *beliefs* on the part of its possessor (eg, an introspective belief that one is in pain); hence, given that the Martian is indeed functionally isomorphic with me, he would have to have the same introspective beliefs as I do. And so the putative absence of *qualia* associated with pain could make no conceivable differences to its causal consequences – or at least no differences that would make it possible for anyone at all to distinguish any case of genuine pain from a case of "ersatz pain".

A different, but related objection to functionalism arises from the possibility of "inverted *qualia*", apparently first discussed by Locke: might not the same object "*produce in several Men's Minds different* Ideas at the same time [so that] the *Idea* that a *Violet* produced in another Man's Mind by his Eyes were the same that a *Marigold* produced in another Man's and *vice versa*" (*Essay* II. 32. xv). Wittgensteinians tend to grind their teeth at this supposition, but Shoemaker, starting from the – in some respects – easier case of intrasubjective inversion (I wake up one morning and find that violets look the way marigolds looked to me yesterday and vice versa) can find no convincing case for ruling it out, provided the scenario is drawn in sufficiently sophisticated terms. He argues, however, that the supposition need not damage functionalism: for even though (if *qualia* inversion is possible) the qualitative character of an experience may not be capturable in a functional analysis, nevertheless the similarity and identity conditions for *qualia* will be functionally definable (because, roughly, *qualia* will affect a person's beliefs about the similarity of his experiences, and these beliefs will in turn be functionally definable because of the causal role they play). Moreover, if similarity conditions for *qualia* are functionally definable, this opens the possibility that we might be able (in principle) to determine empirically whether the experiences of two subjects are qualitatively similar, by investigating the physiological structures in terms of which the relevant functional properties are "realized".

The attraction of Shoemaker's position here is that, without wishing away the inner aspects of our mental life (as some functionalists have tended to do), he nevertheless manages to defuse the threat posed by the subjective dimension by showing that, though there is a sense in which *qualia* remain "ineffable", they are no longer to be thought of as free-floating balloons hovering mysteriously round our mental states; for there is also a sense in which they can be integrated into the rest of our understanding of the mind. If this is right, then functionalists have nothing to fear from *qualia*.

Another major theme in the collection is the demise of dualism. Shoemaker has come to regard his own position on the mind as firmly materialist and observes that despite "pockets of dualistic belief in the general populace" scarcely any contemporary philosophers of mind think that substantive mind–body dualism is still a serious option. Such dualism, Shoemaker contends, is either incoherent or empirically implausible, depending on which version you choose. Further topics discussed include the nature of properties and changes (including puzzle properties like "grue"), reflection on which leads Shoemaker to propose a causal account of what a property is.

None of the essays is easy reading for the argumentation is minutely detailed. This is analytical philosophy at its most professional; altogether a formidable achievement.

Speculative sums

Stephen Clark

T. L. S. SPRIGGE
Theories of Existence
187pp. Penguin. Paperback, £2.95.
0140221670

The great Polish Platonist, Wincenty Lutosławski, writing in *The Knowledge of Reality* (1930), coined the term "theasy" to mean a way of conceiving of the whole of existence, ourselves included. A theasy differed from a theory in that the latter might be an abstract hypothesis, whereas the former was rooted in the character and interests of the theasist. Lutosławski aimed to provide a comprehensive list of theasies: materialism, idealism, pantheism, spiritualism, mysticism, messianic nationalism. T. L. S. Sprigge does not pretend to so complete a list, and expressly excludes the political dimension of speculative thought (though he does not in practice ignore Marxism, Nazism and the like).

Sprigge describes, usually with imaginative sympathy and always with care, how Cartesian dualists, materialists, idealists (by which he means what Lutosławski called "spiritualists"), Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Spinoza saw the world and their place in it. By restricting himself to "modern" authors (no Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus or Maimonides), and by largely ignoring such familiar figures as Locke, Hume, Mill, Wittgenstein and Quine, he may give less experienced readers a rather strange idea of philosophical progress. The justification of his omissions must be that the conventional historiography of modern philosophy has also ignored too much. We have had far too much "Whig" history, discovering in the old masters only those truths or "truths" that are acceptable to the present establishment. Sprigge, by writing an introduction to certain neglected themes and authors which is no less rigorous and clear than the best of the empiricist tradition (and a great deal clearer than most recent Oxford philosophy), offers a welcome correction. The "washing-machine materialism" and competitive individualism of our present masters are to be repudiated in favour of theasies which emphasize our existence as subjects (not objects), as parts of whole systems (not atomies), as creatures at home in a meaningful, and worshipful, cosmos (not alien intruders in an unmeaning chaos).

One theme which is omitted is the conflict between "realist" and "anti-realist". It is a strange feature of fashionable philosophy that in it naturalistic materialism is combined with an idealist epistemology. The very meaning of our statements is defined by their current "warranted assertibility conditions", and "truth" is no more than our serious agreement. It is assumed that we cannot step outside our language, nor grasp a *reality* that is more than what is logically determined by the evidence before us, and yet it is axiomatic that there was a material universe before any minds awoke to speak of it. This materialistic anti-realism is very distant from Sprigge's own realistic panpsychism, but the battle is not fully engaged. Another, and odder, omission, is any comment on Spinoza's disagreement with an important element of Sprigge's own theasy: the moral importance of the non-human. Like Lutosławski, Sprigge acknowledges the existence of non-human centres of consciousness, and our underlying unity. Spinoza brusquely rejected any suggestion that we might share a nature with the non-human, or concern ourselves with their fate. A revised Spinozism may be possible, but may as well be a full-blooded theism, as Sprigge's panpsychism.

Theories of Existence, none the less, should be widely read, not just as an introduction to selected thinkers, but as a reminder of what may still be done by speculative philosophers to clarify and challenge our common-sensical assumptions.

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Dictates of desire

Mark Platts

J. J. C. SMART
Ethics, Persuasion and Truth
158pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £12.95.
0710202458

Work on "meta-ethics", on the semantics and pragmatics of ethical thought and language, has generally been made to rest, like the very distinction between meta-ethics and normative ethics, upon conceptions of meaning, analyticity and necessity which W. V. Quine has spent a lifetime challenging. J. J. C. Smart sets about the task of constructing a meta-ethical theory on the supposition that Quine's challenge has succeeded.

Given that starting-point, it is as unsurprising as it is unworrying that Professor Smart detects little of value in standard discussions of *the naturalistic* fallacy. But by giving special attention to the problems of "radical interpretation" of ethical discourse, Smart thinks he can show "what is right and what is wrong with both the naturalist (definist) position and the non-naturalist position"; he also thinks he can show what both emotivist and subjectivist theories "are confusedly getting at". Small wonder, then, that Smart thinks his account "to some extent reconciliationist". But even allowing for its brevity, the value of his discussion here is restricted from the outset by his failure to consider the obvious point that if Quinean "radical interpretation" is to be used as a means of analysing value-discourse in general, and moral discourse in particular, then its usual, behaviouristic methods will need to be substantially modified. And it still seems to me simply wrong to hold that "Moore was thinking of ethical sentences as intimately connected with desire and action in a way in which factual sentences are connected rather with belief".

Smart, however, clearly thinks a lot of that. He holds that "technical semantics" cannot decide the question of whether ethics is "factual"; rather, that is to be decided "by the most plausible theory, in the light of total science, including sociology, of how ethical language functions in our lives". Choosing to focus upon "the rather central employment of ethical language" to *persuade* others to act, and accepting the orthodoxy that "actions always have to be caused by a desire", Smart would be entitled to conclude that this rather central employment of ethical language" is "intimately connected with desire". In fact he concludes something far stronger: that "science, history, and so on, are concerned with finding out what the world is like, whereas in ethics we are concerned with what to do about the world". Apparently more specifically, the claim is that "the use of 'ought' and 'good' and their cognates are related to desire while scientific language is related to belief".

The trouble with all this is not just the question-begging nature of Smart's premisses, nor the evident invalidity of the argument itself; the deepest worry relates to the *content* of his desired conclusion. Like many others, Smart wishes to replace the metaphysical "fact–value dichotomy" with the "belief–desire dichotomy" of philosophical psychology. Given the seeming intractability of directly metaphysical questions about fact and value, the attraction of some such change of tack is clear enough. But it is also clear enough that all now comes to turn upon the adequacy of our understanding of the presumed dichotomy within philosophical psychology.

Smart at least recognizes a difficulty here. He tries to illuminate the notion of belief by means of comparisons with maps – a map being "in itself desire-neutral". But on the notion of desire a striking silence is maintained. All we are told is that while factual beliefs, including the metaphysical, can "canalize" our desires, "*ultimate* desires are not themselves determined by factual beliefs". This is familiar stuff; what it singularly fails to pay any attention to is the full range of ways in which we can *understand* the having of some specific desire. It is therefore no surprise to find the blanket-term "rhetoric" being invoked to characterize all varieties of (verbal) persuasion which do not fall within the scope of Smart's "canalizing" model.

Much attention is paid to "ought". Smart worries about how much we need such a word, and devises a pragmatic account of why we have it. Unfortunately, he runs together the perfectly good thought that the bland assertion "You ought to do it" is, in general, tiresomely uninteresting, with the thought that this is so because of the lack of "canalizing-power" of such an assertion.

Ethics, Persuasion and Truth concludes with a discussion of free-will and determinism, and with some brief reflections upon the relations between ethics, science and metaphysics. In neither case is understanding much advanced by the contributions here.

Transatlantic planting

Allen Paterson

ALLEN LACY
Home Ground: A gardener's miscellany
259pp. Faber. £11.95.
0374172544

Compilations of newspaper articles are apt, almost inevitably, to be considered bedside books: things to be found kindly stacked in friends' guest-rooms, offering, it is hoped, a certain interest combined with soporific effect, like lettuce. For *Home Ground* an analogy with celery would be closer; the enjoyable crispness is the predominant sensation.

Allen Lacy is a professor of philosophy at Stockton State College in New Jersey, but of this we learn next to nothing here. It is his passion for gardening of which he writes and, as he explains in his preface, also of "some of the plants I have lived with and loved (and a few that I have disliked or that did not return my affections) over a lifetime of gardening that got under way in Irving, Texas, during World War II, after I bit a teacher in the leg and was sentenced to do penance for this gross misdeed by working in an iris patch". He now gardens in New Jersey, not far from the sea, in a climate which to most British gardeners would seem extreme in both summer and winter and also undoubtedly southern in emphasis: latitude is about that of Calabria, tub-grown plumbago can be stood out by the end of April and *Magnolia virginiana* grows wild in wet woodlands.

Home Ground brings together articles written since 1979 for various newspapers and magazines – among them the *Wall Street Journal*, whose gardening column Mr Lacy initiated. With some new pieces there are over sixty essays in all. The book is divided, rather arbitrarily, into two parts: the articles in "Gardens Wild and Tame" are more consistently about individual plants or plant groups while "Pets, Peeves and Confessions" moves into broader issues; the joys of compost, for example, or garden advisers. But in spite of discursions it is to plants he soon returns: Lacy, like all good gardeners, is a plant addict.

This genre of garden essay-writing is common enough in Britain and has an honourable lineage going back to Bacon and beyond. Some of its protagonists have greatly influenced contemporary taste: one thinks of Addison's famous *Spectator* piece of 1712: "I . . . cannot but fancy that an Orchard in Flower is not infinitely more delightful than all the little Labyrinths of the most finished Parterre;" or of V. Sackville-West's *Observer* column, which may be more lasting than her grander literary works. Lacy, in an appendix, "Sources and Resources", invaluable to North American readers, remarks of a useful textbook – *The Reader's Digest Illustrated Guide to Gardening*, originally published in England in 1975 – that it had been "scrupulously revised to suit North American conditions, something that unfortunately does not always take place with British imports". In return, for the uninitiated British reader, *Home Ground* needs a short glossary. Even the most basic concepts are not necessarily what they seem. In North America, a garden is apt to mean just the vegetable plot: the rest, however ablaze with beauty, is not demeaned by being called a yard. Similarly, to fertilize has nothing to do, at least directly, with the transference of pollen from stamen to stigma but with the application of something to make the plant grow in the first place. And vernacular plant names are the greatest snare.

I have little doubt that British amateur gardeners are generally more knowledgeable than their North American counterparts and thus able to take further relatively undiluted information without flinching. The difference is nowhere more apparent than in the acceptance of plant names. In "Navy Blue Tulips and Early Snowdrift, Indeed!" Lacy is splendidly scathing about plant catalogues which coin common names as they go, with supreme disregard for facts, misleading their customers for fear of terrifying them with truth: "other alliums are offered, without the slightest hint that they are alliums . . . one is called Sunny Twinkles, another Cascade Bells and a third Alpine Rosy Bells, and the lot of them seem to be known collectively as Mountain Bells".

But even Lacy has his moments of retraction: *Leptospermum scoparium* has a "jaw-breaking Latin name" while to be called *Phyllostachys bambusoides* is "formidable". Indeed the piece on Rudbeckias hangs the fact that Lacy called them Rudibeckias for many years. Does it matter? Not really except, twice, one sees *Cornus kousa* "chiniensis" when it is difficult to know whether to castigate the proof-reader or take it as another example of Mr Lacy's insistence on being one of the boys in spite of being a professor of philosophy and a jolly good writer, provocative, robust and knowledgeable, on plants and gardens.

Centuries of cultivation

John Buxton

GEORGE ORDISH
The Living Garden
263pp. Bodley Head. £12.95.
0370308328

This is an original and informative book, which perhaps should be classified as Science Fiction. Under the guise of the history of a garden in the Kentish Weald over the last four-and-a-quarter centuries George Ordish, who has worked as an economic entomologist for the United Nations and for the Food and Agriculture Organization, traces the developments which would probably have taken place in such a garden from the first planting of medicinal herbs and the introduction of hops and tulips to the usage of hormone sprays and the complex chemical warfare that takes place in our gardens today. Anyone who has tried to discover from letters and account books the actual history of an old garden will know the frustrations encountered with entries such as "Plants for the gardens 5s" or "Shrubs 7s 6d" and nothing specific entered except where there was a planting of vines (which were usually deemed worthy of mention) or the gift of some specimen tree to commemorate a wedding or a distinguished visitor. Sometimes a diarist who has been to the garden will record something, as Celia Fiennes noted that the Fellows of New College, in which she had a hereditary interest, "take much delight in greens of all sorts Myrtle Oringe and Lemons and Lorrestine growing in potts of earth". But since it is impossible to discover precisely what plants could be growing at any one time in a particular Kentish garden it is legitimate to describe what was likely to be there at various times. This Mr Ordish has done with discrimination, and he has also recorded changes in methods of cultivation. In addition, he has an account of the other inhabitants of such a garden: mammals, birds, amphibians, insects, spiders, molluscs, for all these contribute to or detract from the charm and success of a garden.

The Living Garden then is a comprehensive and very well-informed account of the development of an English garden through the care (and neglect) of a succession of owners since the mid-sixteenth century. It is not the history of a particular garden, which can be found on a map of Kent (though it is so presented), nor is it a history of gardening in England, but rather an ecological study of a "typical" English garden (if such a place can be imagined). We are told many surprising things, such as that the weight of earthworms in pasture will equal that of the cattle grazing on the surface, or that if a spider takes a bite out of a magpie moth among the gooseberries it "will go to the edge of its web and spit out any juice absorbed". There are excellent accounts of the introduction of new flowers and vegetables, sometimes, as with the potato, very slow and hesitant, at others, as with Keen's strawberry seedling in 1821, with immediate approval, surpassing William Butler's enthusiasm which Izaak Walton recorded a century and a half before.

The Living Garden is provided with attractive illustrations and plans, with a chronological table, and with a bibliography – in all it is a most interesting book.

In *How to Make A Wildlife Garden* (192pp. Elm Tree. £8.95. 0 241 11448 9) Chris Baines draws on experience from his own quarter-acre garden which is the habitat of insects, birds and wildlife in general.

Vital vegetation

Matthew Jebb

ANTHONY HUXLEY
Green Inheritance: The World Wildlife Fund book of plants
193pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Harvill. £9.95.
0002726149

Anthony Huxley's book reads like a thesaurus of waste; 120 square miles of irreplaceable rain forest are being destroyed every day. How many crucial drugs, food-plants and objects of beauty we are losing it is impossible to estimate. The full horror of what *Homo sapiens* has perpetrated upon his only home is difficult to convey. Rather than attempt any moral crusade, Huxley presents an impressive number of facts and anecdotes about humans and plants which enable one to see only too clearly how vital the vegetation of the world is, and what great potential is being lost, for ever, by over-exploitation. He points out that plants are used in this technology-bound age to a far greater extent than most people realize.

Tracing the history of edible, medicinal and ornamental plants, from potatoes to tulips, the book presents numerous, beautifully illustrated potted histories of such plants as the Cinchona Tree, the source of quinine: the essence of tonic water, and an anti-malarial drug which has never been bettered.

One of the strongest impressions one is left with after reading *Green Inheritance* is the extraordinary incompetence of modern man as a plant breeder. When Columbus discovered North America, the North and South American Indians had bred some 300 variants of maize; now just a handful of these remain. A recent EEC ruling prohibits the sale of "unlisted" vegetables; thus many hundreds of cabbage, potato and bean varieties, each with its unique flavour, form and ability are condemned to a similar fate. Rather than being based on biological principles, the breeding of cereal crops has resulted in literally millions of acres of identical "clones", each equally susceptible to disease and drought. The great Irish potato famine and, more recently, the decline of the English elm should teach us that variety is the key to biological success.

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The third sentence of the third paragraph from the end of J. L. Houlden's review of E. P. Sanders's *Jesus and Judaism* (*TLS*, April 5) should have read: "Those faults have stemmed not always from ignorance or bad reasoning, but often from an overmastering desire to find a theologically congenial Jesus."

The author of *The Making of Mark*, the two volumes of which were noticed on page 380 of the *TLS*, April 5, as recently published, is J. Duncan M. Derrett.

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FLORENCE KATE UPTON (1873–1922) Portrait artist, illustrator and creator of the Golliwogg children's books. Information requested on her life, papers, or location of paintings. Norma S. Davis, Dept. of Humanities, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA 84602. L134

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